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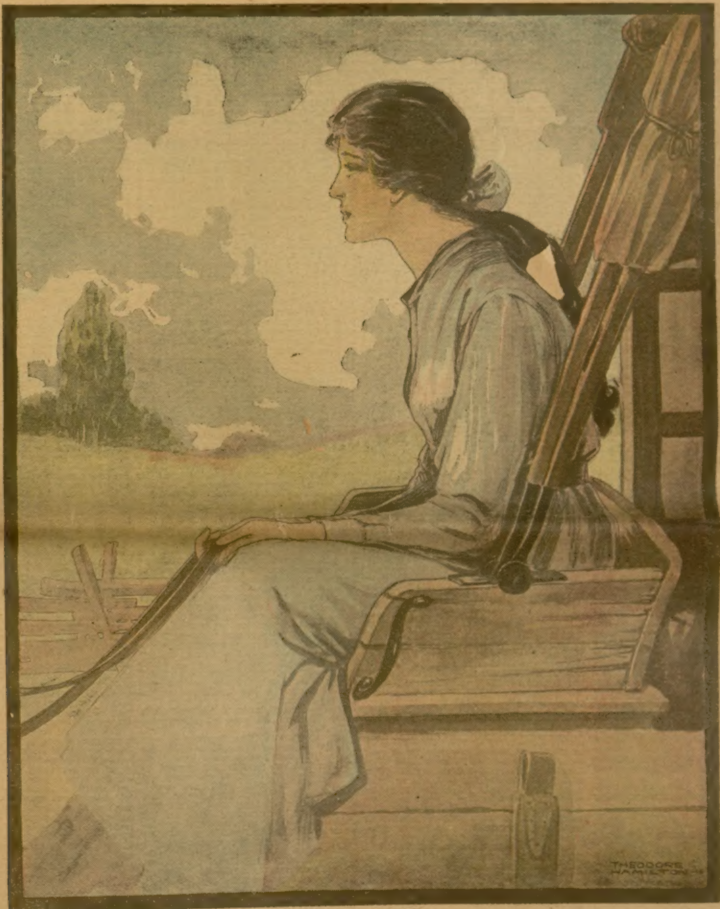

Fires in the Night

-:- Or, -:-

In Pioneer Days

By Willis E. Link

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH OF PENNINGTON.

ALL over northern Iowa the inhabitants were generally under the debilitating influence of "spring fever" one hot, sultry May day in one of the years of the last decade of the last century. Horses seemed to be under the same lazy spell as they toiled across the fields or along the roads. Among all these animals it would have been hard to find any that were more dejected and indifferent appearing than a team dragging themselves along about a mile out from a small collection of houses known as Ledyard. The two quadrupeds composing the team were both a dirty gray and were evidently nearing the end of their span of life. Slowly they moped along, for the driver upon the seat of the weather-beaten wagon covered with a patched and blackened canvas was making no effort toward urging a faster progress.

The driver of the forlorn outfit was a girl—a girl so small and slender in body that one might call her a child; but looking into her face it seemed certain she was in the last of her "teens." It was an oval face with care and experience written in every feature. There was just enough olive in the complexion to prevent the sun and wind from seriously marring the general clearness. The abundant raven hair was compressed by a soiled ribbon, and thence fell to her waist, for during this day she had had no time to use a comb which could be seen slightly protruding from a pocket sewed upon the canvas top of the wagon. The big black eyes were not bold, but shy and sensitive, with no evil shadows lurking in their liquid depths. A calico dress had been put on clean that morning, but the dust of the road had already badly soiled the garment.

"We are not much over a half-mile from town, Daddy," she said, in a voice of encouragement, as she glanced back of the seat at a figure lying upon some sadly worn blankets spread over the material with which the wagon was loaded. The person outstretched was an old-appearing man—aged by toil and privations rather than years—and his face was drawn and seamed with pain.

"I can't hold out that long," the man groaned in his agony. "Let the wagon stop, for I can't stand riding longer."

"I see the bunch of houses not far away," said the girl, in a tone of perplexity and indecision, and she glanced toward the buildings that showed plainly in the bright sunlight.

"No matter. In another hour I shall be forever at rest, and it will make no difference where."

"Oh, Daddy!" Sorrow, despair, horror, all were blended in the voice and written in every expression of the eyes and countenance.

"I am sorry on your account," gasped the man between paroxysms of pain. "I ought to have told you something before this and not have put it off as I have done."

"Don't, Daddy!" almost sobbed the girl. It seemed to her as if the sick man was worrying over some plan or circumstance that was of trifling importance in view of his serious condition.

"Stop the horse," he commanded; "then perhaps I can rest easier and tell you now."

"Here is a small house by the side of the road," exclaimed the girl. "I'm going to run in there and see if I can get some kind of help."

She stopped the slowly crawling team, and without heeding a feeble protest from the man, ran to the open door of the cabin. She was met at the threshold by a young woman whom she afterward learned was Mrs. Conway.

"Daddy is dying in the wagon and I do not know what to do!" hysterically sobbed the girl.

An expression of amazement came into the face of Mrs. Conway, and she stared at the girl as if unable to speak. Was the woman more affected by what she saw than what she heard? This was a question that did not occur to the grief-stricken girl gazing up imploringly thru her tears. The woman stood a moment as if spellbound. Then she seemed to shake herself free from this influence and started toward the wagon.

"Come," she said to the girl; "we will see what we can do."

At the wagon the two looked in under the canvas at the sick man. One glance was enough to show Mrs. Conway his desperate condition.

"He must not lie there—we must get him into the house upon a bed," she declared.

If she had not been so strong the task never could have been accomplished. In five minutes the sufferer was lying upon the only bed the cabin afforded.

"A doctor ought to be here at once," stated the young woman.

"I will unhitch a horse and ride into town after one," said the girl, who had now dried her tears and was bearing up bravely under her distressing surroundings.

"I am afraid it is no use," groaned the man, feebly. "You had better listen to what I have to say while I have a little strength."

"Don't worry, Daddy; the doctor will bring you around all right yet," and the girl tried to speak cheerfully, but down in her heart a great dread held possession. While she was loath to leave, she knew she should not delay in bringing medical assistance.

"Good-by, Daddy," she murmured, bending over and kissing the twitching lips of the old man.

"Good-by. You are a good girl, and may God watch over you always," came feebly but earnestly from the intensely suffering man.

The girl soon had a horse unhitched, and springing upon its back she lashed the surprised beast into a canter. In a few minutes she was riding along the main street of the small town which had sprung up with the advent of the railroad two or three years before.

"Bub, can you tell me where I can find a doctor?" she asked an urchin who was staring at her from the sidewalk in front of one of the stores.

"I guess Doctor Donald is in his office over there," bashfully answered the youngster, pointing across the way to a tiny building crowded between two more pretentious structures. In a moment the girl was off her horse and had the animal tied to the most convenient of the posts which were placed along the side of the thorofare for such purposes.

If Dr. Walter Donald, as the neat sign outside his office read, had had any premonition of what the next five minutes meant to him, he would not have been indolently reclining in his chair while he tried to be interested in the contents of a medical journal. The day was so warm that his coat and vest had been cast aside, and one could plainly see that he was a young man of medium height and well proportioned as to figure. That very day his auburn hair had been cropped closely, and a red mustache trimmed down until it was a small affair. The eyes were of a blue-gray combination, and the complexion inclined to florid. All in all, the young man was not what would be generally designated a "good looker," but, nevertheless, there was something peculiarly attractive, for his whole air and expression showed forth the finer qualities of mind and heart.

"Are you Doctor Donald?" inquired a voice from the open doorway, and the young physician dropped his journal to glance at the speaker.

Never would he forget this instant, but at the time he was conscious of no feeling save that of professional interest, as he assumed a more suitable posture. There was a certain curiosity in his mind, for the girl at the door appeared poverty-stricken and very forlorn, evidently a stranger in the town and the country round about, because during the year he had been located in the town he had become familiar with the people of the community.

"That is what they call me," smiled the young man, and he became conscious that he was gazing into an exceedingly pretty face shaded under a faded and wilted sunbonnet.

"Can't you come with me at once out to Mr. Conway's—I believe that is the name the lady gave. My father is very sick there." And tears began to gather in the eyes of the girl.

"Your father?" This was plainly an interrogation, for the Doctor knew of no such person liable to be at the Conway home.

"Yes, Daddy and I are traveling across the country, and he was taken sick this morning—perhaps he was sick all night, but did not let me know. When we reached the Conway place he was so bad that I stopped. Mrs. Conway helped me get him into her house, and there he is now. Won't you please hurry?" she finished with a tearful appeal.

"Certainly. I will have my horse and buggy around in a jiffy, and you can ride back with me and lead your horse," he said, for he had looked out and taken notice of the animal at the post.

With a half-sob she sank back into a chair which he had placed for her. He hurried out, and in ten minutes was back in front of his office with his conveyance. It was not long until they were driving away, the girl holding to a strap by which she led her reluctant horse.

It was not much over half an hour from the time the girl left the Conway home until she entered it again with the Doctor. Mrs. Conway sat in one corner of the room, evidently unnerved over the situation. The girl stood a moment gazing wonderingly at the plainly agitated woman, then glided into the other room of the house where the sick man had been placed upon the bed.

"Daddy, oh, Daddy!" came a piercing wail of hopeless despair from the bedroom, and the Doctor quickly stepped to the door thru which the girl had passed. She was upon her knees by the bedside, staring with tearless eyes at the figure lying before her. One glance and the Doctor knew that he was too late. A life evidently of poverty and hardship was ended, and the girl by the bed was fatherless—and, apparently, motherless.

Doctor Donald turned and gazed at Mrs. Conway, who was still seated, and who seemed to be paying no attention to what might be the situation in the bedroom. He had casually glanced at her the few times he had passed her upon the street at Ledyard, but now he surveyed her with more interest.

She wore a dress of serviceable percale, and her figure was larger than the average of her sex, strength being indicated rather than gracefulness. The hair was almost black, the eyes a dark gray, and the face inclined to coarseness, but upon the whole she was not an unattractive young woman—and she probably was not much older than the bereaved girl by the bedside. While he had always indifferently passed her by, a dim consciousness would come to him that defiance and recklessness radiated from her countenance, but now the expression seemed to verge upon consternation. Did death affect her so strongly, and was this the reason why she showed no womanly sympathy by going to the orphaned girl with some act or word of comfort?

As the woman was so unconcerned or unconscious of what simple courtesy required, he must try and offer some expression of consolation to the stricken one. With this thought in mind he stepped to her side.

"I know not what to say, but you have my deepest sympathy." He spoke sincerely and bent to raise the kneeling figure to her feet. The only response was a long-drawn, quivering sigh.

His arm went around the slender waist, and the next instant he experienced an angry disgust at himself, for as he drew the passive form to a standing position, a thrill ran thru his body, and an impulse came to fold her in his arms as her only protector. He was a physician trying to comfort a sorrowing, homeless orphan. Why should he experience such a miserable weakness? Almost roughly he drew her thru the doorway and placed her in a chair. It seemed as if she would cling to him, but the next instant her hands dropped limply into her lap.

"What ailed the poor old man?" The query came from Mrs. Conway, who had risen from her chair and advanced into the center of the room.

"Appendicitis, probably," Doctor Donald answered briefly.

"What shall we do?" she again questioned, with an air of anxiety which the Doctor thought very natural under the circumstances.

"I shall get back to town and send out the undertaker and assistants. The body will be taken by him and cared for. Mr. Conway, when he comes home, can look after the team for a day or two. I think this young lady should go back with me, and I guarantee that I shall find a place where she will be cared for until she can make arrangements for herself."

A smile of assurance lit up the Doctor's face as he turned toward the silent girl in the chair. He had about concluded that she had not comprehended a word he had said, when she looked dully into his eyes.

"I have no fit clothes—I can stay in the wagon," she said.

"Not at all," expostulated the Doctor, "for I shall take you to a noble woman who will receive you into her heart and home, no matter whether you are dressed in rags or silk."

Something in the speaker's tone touched the girl, or perhaps some tender reminder came to her, for tears began to flow down her cheeks. Faster and faster they came, until she was shaking with sobs. Mrs. Conway stepped to a window where she stood gazing into vacancy, while the Doctor walked the floor, thinking this outburst was better than the stony silence of the last few minutes. But his eyes were moist as he thought of the forlorn and bereaved girl thus left alone and unprotected upon the prairie. It was some time before she grew calmer, but the Doctor waited patiently.

"We had better start," he suggested at last, "for there will be much to attend to between now and dark."

The girl arose from her chair and went over to where Mrs. Conway stood.

"I can only thank you and ask the Lord to bless you," and there was sincerity and appreciation in tone and look as she extended her hand.

A shiver passed over the woman, then she turned and took the outstretched hand—reluctantly, the Doctor thought—but appeared to be at a loss for words to respond.

"I am glad—you are welcome," she stammered and then resumed her position at the window, her face twitching with agitation.

"She is surely a strange woman," thought the Doctor, while the girl was too overcome by her trouble to notice anything peculiar.

While driving back to Ledyard with Doctor Conway, she gave a brief account of herself.

Her name was Tina Pennington, and she had been born in Illinois. While yet a little child—she could barely remember it—her parents had moved to eastern Iowa. About three years ago her mother had died. After this event, her father, Robert Pennington, had seemed a changed man. He began a roving life over the country, taking her, his only child, with him. It seemed that he never could find the location to suit. He had told her a week before that within a month they would settle down somewhere. It was high time, for all his property was gone save the old team and the weather-beaten wagon. Now he was dead—and at this the tears came afresh.

She quietly sobbed until they were driving into the little burg. Doctor Donald turned his horse toward one of the better residences, and soon the desolate girl was being comforted and made to feel at home by a noble, true-hearted woman and her family.

That evening Mrs. Pailey, her benefactress, was quite busy in making calls upon other women who had daughters about the size of Tina, and several wardrobes received an overhauling. The result was that a becoming costume was arranged for the orphan girl.

The funeral services occurred the next day at the church situated at one side of the town. Tina expected to be the only mourner, and therefore was surprised when Mrs. Conway entered the pew with her. The woman extended her hand and seemingly tried to be sympathetic. Tina's heart warmed toward the one who thus was trying to share in a companionship of sorrow.

Just outside the town a plot of ground had been fenced in for a cemetery, and here Robert Pennington was buried. With Mrs. Pailey upon one side and Mrs. Conway upon the other, Tina bore the ordeal with considerable fortitude. She attracted considerable attention, of course, for the unusual circumstances had brought a large gathering.

In this particular no one glanced at her with such frequency as did a certain newcomer in the community. Two weeks before, this woman and her husband had moved into a newly completed and commodious house—at least, for that country and time—upon a quarter-section of virgin prairie land about two miles out from the town.

The next morning the woman called upon Mrs. Pailey and stated that she wished to see Tina. When the latter appeared the visitor introduced herself as a Mrs. Older, and immediately offered employment and a home, which Tina gladly accepted. As Mr. Older was very busy, the wife had driven into town herself, and upon her return Tina was with her. As she rode along the girl whispered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for the home which she now would have.

When Mr. Older came in for dinner and was introduced to Tina, he gazed at her in such a puzzled fashion that she became plainly embarrassed. Becoming aware of this, he changed his manner, and soon was lightly conversing about matters pertaining to that prairie country.

That afternoon Tina noticed a picture hanging upon the wall of the "best room." It was an old photograph of a girl about her own age. The picture must have been quite old, she thought, for the subject was dressed in a style of the past generation. But what riveted Tina's attention was the fact that the face bore such a remarkable resemblance to her own.

Who could be the original of this photograph? She knew that her parents had no brothers or sisters. Therefore the girl represented could be no near relative, in any event. Mrs. Older was at that moment somewhere out of hearing, so Tina decided to wait a day or two before trying to obtain information which would explain the cause of this remarkable similarity.

That night the orphan occupied the most satisfactory quarters that had been hers since her mother's death. For a long time she had slept in a cot upon the ground, or under the canvas of the wagon, while in winter her father would rent two or three small rooms in some town, where every night each would arrange a rough bed upon the floor. While the girl mourned her loss sincerely, she felt very thankful that her lines promised to fall in such a pleasant place as the Older home. The thought of her father brought tears until her pillow was wet, but Nature had her way before the passing of an hour, and Tina slept.

Her father's death had indeed brought a sudden change in the girl's course of life—far more so than she dreamed—but as she peacefully slumbered another event was occurring not far away, which, ere the prairie would be white with the first snow of winter, would result in bringing down upon her a tempest of trials with far-reaching consequences to herself and others, and during years to come in many a household upon this Hawkeye prairie the stranger at the fireside would be entertained by the strange and thrilling tale.

But blissfully unconscious, Tina slept.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRE AT CONWAY'S.

ONLY the stars dissipated some of the gloom of the night following the day on which Tina took up her abode at the Older home. No light shone from a single house in Ledyard, and, apparently, all the denizens of the small town were in bed. One individual, however, was an exception. He was passing most of the time lying upon the broad platform in front of the church from which the body of Pennington had been borne less than two days before. As it approached midnight, the man upon the platform became ill at ease. Every few minutes he would arise and gaze off to the same point of the horizon, then muttering some unintelligible words he would lie down again. At times he struck a match to light his pipe, and by the glare his face was plainly shown for a moment.

It was a coarse, heavy face, and one glance of a physiognomist would be enough for him to decide that the countenance was a chart showing no lines of

OUR readers are strongly urged to read "FIRES IN THE NIGHT; or, IN PIONEER DAYS," which begins in this number of the Ledger. Next week look out for another railroad story by Alvah Milton Kerr, entitled, "THE SILKEN SIGNAL; or, HANCOCK'S COUP." You will find it thrillingly interesting. Some of the best stories in all the history of the Ledger will appear in these papers during the next few months. If you want to make some one a present, why not give him or her a year's subscription to the LEDGER? They would get lots of entertainment and fun out of it. Try it once.

refinement, right living, or moral character. As to general appearance, the eyes were small, the hair coarse and black, the body short and stocky, and the garments cheap as well as inclined to loudness. If one of the residents of Ledyard had been close at hand when a match was struck, he would have recognized Jay Bentley, a young man of about 25, who had arrived in the town a few weeks before, and who had since spent a part of his time out among the farmers canvassing for a nursery firm.

It was a half-hour past midnight, and the ostensible fruit-tree man was evidently becoming very impatient. He kept his gaze almost constantly fixed in the direction where the prairie lay practically unbroken by the plow. At last he gave a low chuckle of satisfaction as a light suddenly began to glow a mile or more away. Rapidly the glow became brighter, then a tiny flame shot up into sight. Quickly Jay Bentley vanished from the vicinity, and the next minute he noiselessly climbed into an open window of a long, one-story dwelling, where he had his room.

He did not seek his bed, but, instead, his next act was to arouse the family with the information that a house was on fire out upon the prairie. He then dashed away and ran to the only livery stable in the town. A driver always slept there on a rude cot, in order to be close at hand for a possible night call. This man was quickly awakened and informed of the fire. In haste a team was hitched to a buggy and the two men sped away in the direction of the now plainly evident blaze. The family aroused by Bentley had given the alarm to neighbors, and several others were hurrying to the fire.

"It's where Fred Conway lives," announced the liveryman, upon reaching the outskirts of the town.

"You bet," briefly assented Bentley.

The two drove up to the burning building just as the roof and one side fell in. A neighbor who lived a quarter-mile farther along had been awakened in some manner, and came up at this moment. The three stood staring thru an open window of the blazing house at a bed enveloped in flames. Upon the bed a figure lay motionless. Evidently no succor could be given, and the men stood speechless.

Just as several others arrived upon the scene, the floor gave way, and the bed with its silent occupant was plunged into an excavation under the house used for a cellar.

"That is Conway's wife, and he is not here, for I saw him take the train for Algona this afternoon," said the liveryman, solemnly.

That the unfortunate woman had met her death in the burning building was plain to be seen by all. For an hour the men stood around until only smoking debris at the bottom of the cellar remained. All decided to return to their homes until after sunrise, when a search would be made, and perhaps some charred remains of Mrs. Conway's body might be discovered.

Just as the small party entered the town the train stopped at the depot. This was not an unusual occurrence, altho this passenger from the south stopped only upon signal. No one was at hand to see who alighted from or boarded the train. It barely stopped, and as it moved away two persons hurried around the end of the small depot, one starting up the single business street, while the other turned toward the one hotel of the town. This latter individual rapped at the door, and when the landlord came down he admitted a well-dressed, nervous-appearing gentleman, whose age might be anywhere between 25 and 30. This night arrival registered as "Percy Howard, Des Moines," and was shown a room.

Meanwhile the other man had continued along the main street until he met the party coming from the fire.

"Hello, boys!" the lone pedestrian affably exclaimed. The men recognized the voice and halted in a state of uncertainty.

"Mr. Conway, we have some bad news for you," one managed to say.

"What can it be?" and the voice seemed unnaturally hoarse.

"Your house burned to the ground tonight," came the information.

"This is bad, of course, but then I don't own the house, for I rented it because I could not find even a shanty in town," and the tone conveyed an impression of relief.

"But something else happened," haltingly spoke the informant.

"What?" came sharply.

"Your wife was burned to death in the house," was the hesitating statement.

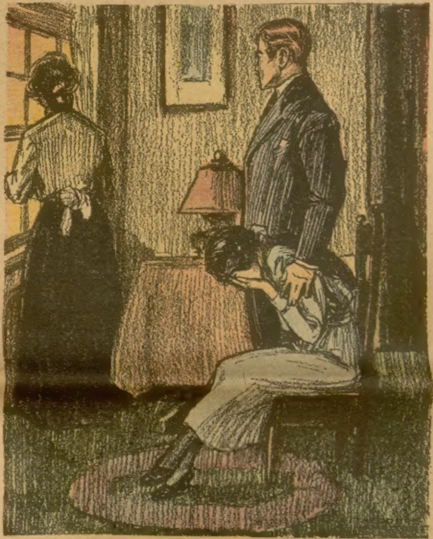
"Oh, my God!" The voice was pitched to a distressingly high note. The man threw his hands above his head in a melodramatic fashion, and the next instant fell to the ground, where he groveled forlornly, while the men stood in mute sympathy.

In time Conway was induced to arise, and he was led to the home of one of the men who kindly offered him shelter for the rest of the night. For a while moans were heard coming from the room he occupied, but it really was not long until there was silence.

In the morning a party of searchers repaired to the site of the former cabin. Conway did not go, as he declared he could not stand the ordeal. Drawn by morbid curiosity, a considerable crowd gathered around the still smoking cellar. After a quantity of water from a pump near at hand had been poured over the debris, several men undertook to rake over the material. For some time nothing of moment was found; then from under some ashes and nearly consumed bedding a charred hand was drawn.

The grewsome object was left lying upon a shovel, and as nothing else of consequence was discovered, the crowd had to be satisfied with long gazes of awe at the only remains of the victim of the fire. There was scarcely anything but charred bone, save that a tarnished and disfigured band could be distinguished upon what had been a finger.

Among those assembled the person who had registered at the hotel as Percy Howard attracted considerable attention. He had a swarthy face, dark eyes and coal-black hair, and his beard and mustache were so heavy that the mouth could not be seen. He made a striking appearance among the rest of the men. He was dressed in a late style summer suit, which alone would be enough to make him noticeable in that gathering of plainly dressed men. He had not given his occupation, but talked in a vague way about investigating a proposition. Some one advanced the idea that the stranger was a detective, that perhaps this fire was in the line of his business, and it was not long before this view became generally accepted.



Faster and faster they came until she was shaken with sobs.

After many had gorged their sight upon the charred hand, Percy Howard sauntered up. He gazed indifferently until the ring caught his attention. Quickly he bent over and pulled the band away from the shrunken digit, his hand visibly trembling as he did so.

"I shall hand this to Mr. Conway," he remarked, as he stepped away.

Some in the crowd were nonplused at this act and inclined to raise an objection, but others argued that this fine gentleman must be a friend of Conway's, and that his action was probably all right.

Almost immediately Howard started back to town, walking rapidly. Halfway there, he stopped and tore a strip from his handkerchief; then, taking the ring from his vest pocket where he had placed it, he began to clean and polish the relic of the fire. He had not proceeded with his task long before an expression of horror came over his face, and he uttered an ejaculation of dismay.

He heard the rattle of a farm wagon approaching from behind, and he quickly thrust the ring back into the pocket, while he made a determined effort to regain his composure. The driver in passing extended an invitation to him to ride, but the pedestrian declined with thanks. Arriving at the outskirts of the town, he met Conway, who was pacing restlessly around, and the two stopped while they conversed for a few minutes. When Howard passed on, Conway dropped down flat by the side of the road and gave a low laugh, as if considerably amused.

The next day a coroner's inquest was held, the only "remains" being the charred hand. Jay Bentley testified that he had been wakeful and thus had happened to notice the fire. There was testimony as to seeing the body upon the bed and the precipitation into the cellar. Several witnesses told of driving by the cabin that night—one said it was after 11 o'clock when he passed—and seeing Mrs. Conway sitting in the doorway. All knew it was she, because a kerosene lamp in the room gave such a bright light that one could see her face plainly.

The husband testified that he had had to go to the county seat to attend to some business the afternoon preceding the fire, and had returned on the night passenger which arrived at Ledyard a little after midnight. Then he had learned of his loss—and he covered his face with his hands while he groaned mournfully. Questioned further, he said that his wife wore only one ring, an almost plain band with "Nettie" engraved inside—a present from her mother.

Percy Howard was called, and taking a ring from his vest pocket he passed it to Conway. It was the identical ring which his wife always wore, declared the witness, after an examination in which he showed considerable agitation. When Howard was sworn, he told how he had obtained the ring, intending to hand it to Mr. Conway, but that afterward he had thought it best not to do so until the inquest, which he felt sure would be held.

There was nothing for the coroner's jury to do but bring in a verdict of accidental death from fire, which was probably due to the lamp exploding.

Conway took up his abode at the hotel, where he was thrown with Howard almost every hour. As would be expected, the two became quite intimate. In a few days an insurance adjuster arrived in town. Then it became known that the bereaved husband had a substantial consolation. He and his wife had carried a double life insurance, and now at her death the survivor would receive twenty thousand dollars. The policy had been written about six months before.

As this payment was so large, no one was surprised when the company sent an agent for a thoro investigation. There was practically nothing new to bring out. Mrs. Conway had certainly met her death in the destroyed dwelling. She often read herself to sleep while the big lamp stood upon a stand by the bedside—so the husband stated. There could be no possible hint of crime, for there were plenty of witnesses who saw him until train time in Algona that night. If some accomplice set the fire, there was not the faintest clew to show this. There was nothing for the company to do but pay the claim. Conway was informed that this would be done within a fortnight, and the investigator departed.

Fred Conway was a dapper little man of the blond order. His sharp-featured face was somewhat relieved by a sandy mustache and small burnsides. Some declared that his eyes had an insincere, scheming expression, but these physiognomists were generally looked upon as persons who liked to show their deep penetration, when really they knew nothing more than the rest of folks. It was admitted that he might be something of a "blow," but, all in all, Fred Conway was a likable man.

He and his wife had arrived in Ledyard early in the spring, and undoubtedly it was an impossibility to secure a dwelling to live in, but in after time it was recalled that he put forth no special effort to do so. A house a little over a mile out was vacant, and he soon rented this. He bought a few articles of furniture, and the couple began housekeeping for the first time in their lives, for Conway announced that they had been married two years, but had always boarded at hotels. He was looking around for a suitable piece of land to purchase, so he said, and had money to pay the price when he bought—but he was in no hurry.

With twenty thousand dollars added to what he probably possessed, everybody agreed that Conway was an important man to keep in the community. More than half the country surrounding Ledyard was virgin prairie, and the rich young widower was urged to purchase a few hundred acres of this "wild" land to make the tract into a magnificent farm. He would listen patiently to the advice, then give a sigh and walk away. Probably the thought of his great bereavement came to him, and he could not bear to consider any big business deal, the talker would think in pitying sympathy.

The day came when the life insurance policy was paid in full by the company, and upon this date the first cloud of the coming tempest appeared above the horizon of Tina Pennington's new life.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this interesting story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money can buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

SURFACE EFFECT.

A vision all in blue she sits
And smiles demurely while she knits,
  Her pose is full of grace.
I love to watch her fingers white,
As they direct her needles bright,
  I love to watch her face.

An artist would not miss the chance
To paint that arch and winning glance,
  That throat of classic line;
She's most phenomenally fair—
Her glowing cheeks, her sunny hair,
  Her eyes so large and [illegible]

I talked of many things today,
Her one reply was, "I should say!"
  To each remark I made.
To look at, she has not a flaw,
She is the best I ever saw—
  But what if she should fade!

She did not guess my wicked thought,
But ever at her task she wrought,
  Contented quite to charm.
Her surface is all rose and snow,
But when I think of what's below
  I view her with alarm.

* * *

Not Jurymen.

In Harper's Magazine for September, Louise Closser Hale tells of an amusing episode in her recent motor trip thru Virginia. It was at Staunton, and a circus was in town.

"It was near the courthouse that we watched a long file of soberly clad citizens pass by. I stood among the loafers admiring the dignity of what I took to be the makers of our laws and those who sit in judgment on us. Eager to pay a compliment to the citizens of Staunton, I remarked upon the excellent appearance.

" 'Court and jury?' I questioned politely.

" 'No, ma'am,' replied the loafer. 'That's the insane asylum going to the circus.'

"We left the town shortly afterward with our position in life firmly established. We had not intended to head the procession. Our car had started to turn from the side street where the hotel stood into the main thorofare before we appreciated that the traffic had ceased and that the great red and gold band wagon had already passed. There was a hiatus between this band wagon and the elephants, and the ever courteous Southern policeman, seeing us with our baggage strapped on, wished to speed our departure by slipping us into this space.

"When we were once in we could not get out. I won't say that Toby and I cared to get out. This circus idea had been forced upon me, and we accepted it, but the illustrator's face was pitiful.

" 'Are we going to make monkeys of ourselves all our lives?' he asked me, the perspiration rolling down his face.

" 'Not monkeys,' I shouted, for the band had struck up. 'They think we're the proprietors. The monkeys are in the wagons. We really ought to be throwing out handbills.'

"It was very dull after this to go up the hill toward such a respectable place as Churchville, and we were in no hurry to reach it, for the good road ended there, as even a hotel proprietor is forced to admit."

The Feared Man

-:- Or, -:-

Lives at Stake

By Claude H. Gillespie

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CHAPTER IV.

THE propensity for news gathering is characteristic of the small town; it is a part of its life. More than anything else, it enjoys a thrill, something that stirs its pulse by a mental picture of what might have happened, or the grewsome details of some hideous crime that shock it by their awfulness.

An expectant crowd awaited the arrival of the 7:04 the next morning. The sheriff appeared, but without a prisoner. He made his way to the office, and left the crowd gaping at the door labeled "NO ADMITTANCE."

"I know what yer going to say," said the sheriff, in answer to the question expressed in Mooney's face: "but I ain't ridin' today; and if I was, I'd go alone."

"You don't mean——"

"Yep; but I don't prescribe too much noise—not yet."

They were interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Hawley, wife of the first-trick man.

There was a touch of uneasiness in her voice as she asked, "Where is Joe?"

"He's due now," hinted Mooney.

"But—hasn't he been here all night?" she faltered.

"Haven't seen him since he relieved me yesterday morning."

"That can't be," she insisted. "Somebody from the road came to the house in a great hurry last night at two o'clock, saying you had gone home sick, and wanted Joe to sit in the rest of your trick."

Mrs. Hawley stood wide-eyed and trembling.

"I didn't send for Joe, Mrs. Hawley; and he never showed up here."

The 7:04 pulled in and left. From the disconnected conversation of the distracted woman, the sheriff was patiently trying to hit upon clews and motives that would explain the strange disappearance of her husband.

Mooney was burning up the wire with a report to the superintendent. The paymaster and four armed guards were waiting for the Irrigation Company's pay roll. Mooney finished his report and went into the inner office for the package that had so nearly cost him his life a few hours earlier.

When he returned he was white-lipped, and his face was ashen. The package was gone! In its place was an express tag. He handed it to the sheriff. The sheriff swore softly as he read:

"This is almost too easy.

"BLACK MASK."

The sheriff hitched up his trousers in sailor fashion, which he did unconsciously whenever he was about to go into action.

"Things are sure dull around this burg," he drawled; "so I'm goin' to light out and see if I can't kick up some excitement. I'll shake yer hand, Kid. When I come back, I may be headin' a percession—all drivin' slow."

CHAPTER V.

BLACK MASK left the sheriff's room with mingled emotions—or was his mental state one of no emotion, just feeling? The thing that the sheriff had done was too big to be measured by a single thought. It seemed to discourage thought.

That was why he went along unmindful of direction, save that he was leaving behind him men and their deceptive civilization. He was going up into the rugged fastness of the mountains where wild animals and other hunted things sought safety.

It was a man's job the sheriff had given him. He had purchased his own freedom, as it were; but he hadn't paid the purchase price—yet. So he was going away to think, to lay plans; but first he must sleep.

He climbed steadily for two hours. Far up in the mountains, faint echoes answered sounds from the little men's world in the valley below. These warned him to proceed with caution. He remembered the mountain things were hunted.

He came to the summit of the first range. Above him was an overhanging rock, the highest point in the vicinity. The projecting ledge under it, behind the irregular bowlders which formed a natural protection in front, promised the advantages he sought. He climbed up with difficulty. The needles dropped by the pine above, the accumulation of years, made an inviting bed, comfortable and wholesome. It was an ideal bedroom; he could see without being seen.

From his vantage point, he looked across the densely wooded gorge in front of him to the towering mountain that rose on the other side. A silence hung over the works of the Almighty, the solemn silence of the mountains. As his eye slowly took in the endless light and shadows, the sublime in him was stirred. His imagination carried him backward thru dusky centuries, back to creation's chaos. In a world of battling disorder, the Maker, silent and inscrutable, had set an Eden, filled with life and peace.

Crack! Crack!

Men entered and spoiled God's handiwork. Thru an opening far up on the other mountain, he saw a man run and fall. Higher up, three men appeared and disappeared. The murderers were leaving the body of their hapless victim to be violated by prowling beasts, evidently secure in their belief that the mountains were the only witness, and would forever hold their awful secret.

Black Mask mentally calculated the distance to the place of tragedy, and thought of the galling climb that was before him, if he would know the condition of the man who fell. He had not slept in twenty-four hours, and his tired muscles cried out in protest.

Then, the man probably was dead. But his slayers were the most abominable of all detestable men; they were cowards. Instinctively his sympathies went out to their victim.

Again, the man might be alive and need him. His conscience would countenance no doubt. And a hold-up man started on a mission of mercy, and mercy serves without reward and without thanks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sun was nearly two hours higher when Black Mask felt the feeble pulse of the dying man. As he raised him to a more comfortable position, the man opened his eyes. His stare was wild and unseeing.

"Water! Oh, God!" he whined in his delirium.

At the expense of much painstaking, Black Mask collected a few drops where the precious liquid trickled down between two rocks and carried it in his cupped hands. As he moistened the man's lips and tongue the latter smiled his thanks. It was a strained, unnatural smile, but still a smile.

Lying near, partially concealed by undergrowth, was a cap, a station-agent's cap of the U. & Y. As Black Mask picked it up a glimmer of reason came into the other man's eyes. He reached out his hand.

"Is it time to begin the grind already?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper. "It ain't light—yet."

The man was sinking, and Black Mask knew that anything he might tell must be told quickly.

"You have been wounded—shot. Can you tell me about that?"

The man was making a pathetic effort to goad his failing faculties to action.

"I remember—now," he said feebly. "I was called out this morning—early. There were two of them—three later. They put guns to my head—told me they would have to kill me—anyway; but if I didn't spill combination—of safe, they would go back—and kill wife—and baby girl—or worse. I didn't have a chance—myself; but, God—I had to save them! Two went to station—other brought me here—and waited. Others came—made haul—after another stick-'em-up man was caught. They're goin' to spring something up on Gorge line—next. The leader was—for killin' me outright. Lip turned up when talked. Others stood for——"

"The leader!" interrupted Black Mask. "was he——"

The man raised his hand for silence.

"Excuse—me," he said; "that's—my—call."

He listened; then exhaled heavily, and his chest flattened. The message came from the Great Central Office. Joe Hawley, first-trick man at Livingston Junction, was transferred.

Unconsciously, Black Mask uncovered his head. Death seemed to bring to the high solitudes the awesomeness of things eternal. With the reverence of a sacred rite, he lowered the body between two rocks, then covered the opening with heavy stones. During the centuries since the mountains were formed, this sepulcher had awaited its stiffening tenant.

Having finished his self-imposed task, Black Mask followed the trail of the three men, up the mountain.

The dying station-agent had mentioned a facial peculiarity of the leader of his murderers—"Lip turned up when talked." That broken sentence brought before Black Mask a mental picture of the sneering face of Milton Boles, the man who had branded him a criminal, who had made him one.

The thought of what that man had brought into his life, and what he had taken out of it, hurled into motion his intense, savage hatred. He tore along up the mountain, forgetful of time and heedless of the heavy exertions he was inflicting upon his tired body.

Suddenly he stopped. This man was a murderer who murdered to cover other crimes. Alice Powers had been missing for six years. Had Milton Boles murdered her? The awful possibility stupefied his faculties. Then he became calm, calm with the set purpose of having his revenge. He would take time to make it complete—and terrible.

It was long past noon when he reached the top of the last mountain. He was now reasonably certain he knew the destination of the three men. He turned toward the valley where there were things to satisfy his growing hunger.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE days later, Black Mask entered the Black Gorge country. Thru it ran the Gorge line referred to by the station-agent, back in the mountain. Somewhere in this narrow strip of country, the three desperadoes were planning another hold-up. He was there to match his powers against their combined forces.

He went about his undertaking with the cold system of the strategist, always on the alert for the men he sought. His thoro survey of the gorge assured him that the two somber stations in the God-forsaken valley held little real money. It was evident, then, that Boles and his gang had inside information concerning some valuable shipment that would pass over the road.

Late one afternoon, as the chill of the coming night was filling the valley, Black Mask was carefully making his way to the little station at the head of the gorge. He hoped to gain access to the records and from them learn if the operator had received any unusual instructions.

He was approaching an abrupt turn in the trail, where it wound around a ledge of rocks, when, just ahead of him, an unseen woman uttered a low exclamation of surprise. He left the beaten path and went forward with caution.

"Have you no greeting for a friend after a separation of years?" came to him in a man's voice.

The speaker was concealed by the fertile growth that fringed the trail at that point.

Black Mask found an opening in the wall of foliage; before him stood Alice Powers and Milton Boles—the girl he loved and the man he hated. An observer would have detected no evidence of inward emotion reflected in the face of Black Mask; nor would he have expected to. The man had been taught in too severe a school to betray himself in a crisis.

Boles stood at the side of the trail, with his hand extended. Evidently he had expected Miss Powers and had waited her coming.

She looked straight at him. For an instant, her expressive eyes registered fear, then flashed contempt.

"Is the world so small that one cannot escape an evil presence?" she asked.

Boles dropped his hand to his side and his wolfish smile left his lips. The man was either intensely in earnest, or doing a clever piece of acting.

"I am exceedingly sorry that you cannot understand me, or else refuse to try. I wish I could make it plain to you that I have no desire to force my presence upon you. But I am not here to plead my own cause. I am here against my will. I have no means of knowing why you left the security and luxury of your home for this; but I would to God you were safely back there now."

His words came with a force and rapidity that made his sentences difficult to follow. The girl listened with a strained intentness.

"Of—of what would you warn me?" she asked.

"I'm too late to warn you. My movements are being closely watched; so I must state my unpleasant mission and leave you.

"A stranger rendered me a little service one day; he saved my life. I felt under heavy obligations to him, of course, and was sincere in my desire to repay him, at least, in some degree. I was then ignorant of his true character. He was the chief of a band of outlaws; and, in a certain sense, since then I have been his prisoner—his slave. I am a mere toy—a tool, in the hands of that man—but I dare not disobey.

"He knows you are now a telegraph operator. My orders are to stay in the vicinity of your station. You are to be on the lookout for a Wells Fargo shipment of thirty thousand that is expected to leave Denver for the coast, this week. It will obviously pass over this branch. It will probably go thru in the night, and your station will receive orders to give clearance to some special train. You are to acquaint me with such special orders.

"When you have anything to communicate, you are to go to the rear platform, stand a moment, then go back to the office. I'm to come to the station on some pretense and receive the information, which you are to have written out for me.

"Failure to carry out these instructions, or to get the correct information, means nothing milder than death to me; to you, it means worse. I am powerless to help you; I cannot help myself.

"For your own safety, I beg of you to make no attempt to escape, or to disclose the matter to the authorities; because your every movement will be shadowed until this is over. The band is most thoroly organized, and I know something of their resourcefulness."

He paused. From a ridge far above them came the shrill cry of a jay. The call was repeated down in the gorge, not two hundred yards from them.

"My guards are calling, and I must go. Do you thoroly understand your instructions?"

"I understand them. Please go."

Boles parted the branches at the side of the trail and quickly disappeared. He went toward the spot where the jay called down in the gorge. He passed within a few feet of Black Mask.

The latter was well pleased with the turn of events. He had found Alice and learned the danger that confronted her; and he was at hand to protect her and even scores with Boles, his evil genius.

He laid his plans hurriedly. It was dangerous to go after Boles, as he would soon be with his two accomplices. To attempt to surprise three armed men was now too risky. Alice needed him; to trail them in the hope of overpowering them singly was too lengthy and uncertain a process. Time was too precious.

He gave up the thought of personal vengeance. He had a duty to perform. The sheriff's words came back to him—"Help me land that gang you told me about"—and he had sworn to help. He would start at once for Bull's Head, twenty miles distant, and telegraph to Sheriff Williams to come with a posse. They could reach there by the following night. It was remotely probable that anything would develop in the gorge during his absence.

It was more than likely that Boles was truthful in his statement to Alice, that her movements would be watched; so he made no effort to communicate with her.

When he had gone a quarter of a mile, he went forward with less caution. He struck a road that led from an abandoned mine, and went along with a strong, easy swing.

As night fell the moon peeped out from her nest in the clouds and spread her restful glow over the quiet valley. It was good to be alive—and free.

"Put 'em up; and keep 'em up!"

The jarring challenge was hissed right in his ear. Almost at the same instant, his gun was taken from him, and a pair of steel bracelets spitefully snapped upon his wrists.

"I swore I would shoot you on sight—but, gad!—I couldn't!" It was the sheriff who spoke.

"Sure you got the right man?" asked Black Mask.

"Rather. Take a tip from dad. I see my duty plain enough now; but I find I am in danger of losin' sight of it when I let you do too much talkin'.

"I'm going to lay down two rules for your guidance: Don't gab; and obey orders. I'm mighty touchy on them points; and any little indiscretion on your part, and I'm goin' to bore yuh. Remember, I'm jist itchin' fer a chance to start shootin'.

"The general superintendent of the U. & Y wants to make your acquaintance. When he gets tired of your company, he'll probably send you to some famous health resort. Now, march!"

Black Mask would have given worlds to break his enforced silence; but the sheriff's bearing admitted of no doubt as to the consequences if he opened his mouth.

When they reached a station, the sheriff sent two telegrams—one to Mooney to be ready to board a certain train and go with him as a witness; the other was to apprise the general superintendent when he would be at the superintendent's office with his prisoner.

CHAPTER VIII.

LATE in the following afternoon, the sheriff, Black Mask, Mooney, and two uniformed railroad men were admitted into the office of the general superintendent. The superintendent rose and extended his hand.

"On behalf of the road, I want to congratulate you, sheriff, upon your efficient work. I want to say also that the company is ready to pay you the reward of five hundred dollars, if you have with you the long-sought Black Mask."

"No doubt about the identity of the prisoner, Mr. Curtis; but Mr. Mooney, here, has first claim to any reward."

"Mr. Curtis," burst out Black Mask, "since I became his prisoner, this officer has forced silence upon me with a threat of death. Please get this straight."

He then narrated the details connected with the death of the station-agent and the discoveries he had made back in the gorge. It was plain the man was deeply concerned about the safety of the woman operator. It was equally plain that it was nothing to his personal advantage to misrepresent the facts.

"While the Gorge line you mention is not a part of our system," said the superintendent, "this is an occasion when the mere question of ownership must give way to the larger one of law and order. If you had been permitted to speak before, it would have prevented much needless delay."

He then addressed his secretary.

"Mr. Deil, telegraph the details to Sheriff Cooper at Beaver Top. Tell him to act at once. He has only fifteen miles to cover, and should be on hand with a number of deputies before morning. In another message, state full particulars to the general superintendent of the P. & R.; also tell him what action we have taken."

He swung round in his chair and faced the sheriff.

"Now, Mr. Williams, tell me about this man."

With the strong man's disdain for deceit and subterfuge, the sheriff paid full tribute to Mooney's single-handed bravery, making no attempt to make his own acts conspicuous. In disclosing the fact that he had once released his prisoner on his own responsibility, he knew that he was endangering both his official reputation and commission.

The superintendent interrupted him.

"I'm not to assume you went straight to the gorge blindly—you had no clew?"

"I didn't pull no Great Serpent stuff," answered the sheriff; "yet it wasn't exactly a guess.

"Fer quite a spell, I've been tryin' ter get within speakin' distance of the three gents our prisoner tells about. I found out enough ter know where ter look fer them; and I sorta figured out that our guest here wouldn't be far away. You see they're pards.

"He left my room at daybreak, and the job at Livingston Junction was done long before that. His pals had been busy. After they had persuaded Joe Hawley, the day man, to part with the combination of the safe, they took him ter a quiet spot up in the mountains. He's there yet. They're mighty careless about the way they cover up their work. When I was a good half-mile from the place, the bedlam raised by a flock of crows led me ter investigate. Some prowlin' critter had dislodged the stones that covered the crevice where they hid him; and his cap was about all that was left ter identify poor Joe."

Black Mask started to speak, but the superintendent motioned him to be silent.

"If the men who robbed the safe at Livingston Junction are accomplices of this man, how do you explain their endeavoring to throw suspicion on him by leaving a card supposed to have been written by him?" asked the superintendent. "Also, why would he reveal the plans and whereabouts of his accomplices, when he can hope for no reward of clemency?"

"I was headed towards that p'int. It seems there's a girl in the case, and that usually spells trouble. The prisoner admitted to me that the gent in the gorge wasn't doin' much retreatin' in the battle of hearts; so it looks the same ter me as any other ordinary proposition; both is tryin' ter git the other out of the way without resortin' to a gun."

The superintendent turned to Black Mask.

"Have you any statement to make?"

"Sheriff Williams once released me on the promise that I would live straight. That promise I have religiously kept. I will freely answer all questions; and I have no apprehensions for the future."

"Then you deny guilt of the crimes as charged?"

"I had no part in the crimes with which the sheriff imputes me; I have no accomplices; but I admit my guilt of the crimes that the railroad world charges against the name of Black Mask."

"That's enough!" snapped the superintendent. "Sheriff, finish your duty. I will meet you at police headquarters in fifteen minutes."

"Just a moment," broke in Black Mask. "Twenty years is the extreme penalty for highway robbery. Good behavior would reduce my term by two years. I would be well under fifty when released. A man cannot be penalized twice for the same crime. Serving an eighteen-year sentence would make me the possessor of a fortune."

"Explain."

"Every dollar that I collected as a highwayman is safely hidden. After satisfying the requirements of the law the money would be legally mine."

"Well?"

"I am offering that money as the price of my liberty."

The silence became tense.

"I shall have to consult with the higher officials of the road; but whatever action is taken, we cannot liberate until your innocence of implication in the murder of the station-agent is established. We will consider this interview at an end."

As the men rose and filed out of the office, Mooney was the last to go.

"Mr. Mooney," called the superintendent, "I should like to detain you for a moment.

"First, Mr. Mooney, I want to tell you that the road is proud to have in its employ men like you—men who are loyal enough and brave enough to go to such unusual lengths in the performance of what they consider to be duty.

"But we want to give expression to our appreciation in something more substantial than mere commendation. The sheriff has forfeited all claim to the five hundred, so that's justly yours. In addition, any reasonable request that you may make shall be readily granted.

"In the way of another position, or other change of your condition, just what appears to you most inviting?"

"I can't make you feel my thanks, Mr. Curtis, so I won't try to mix 'em up in words.

"If I had my pick of anything on the company's pay roll, it would be a leap in the dark if I changed. I am shifted around enough to give me variety, and I'm making a living. If I was pop sure of a job for life, and that my mother, who is a widow, would be cared for, if I finish my run first—I'd be happier than if I owned the road. I don't want to soar too high—just high enough."

"Your expectations are both moderate and sensible, Mr. Mooney; and I shall issue the instructions necessary to enable you to realize them."

He rose and offered his hand.

"And I sincerely hope you have before you many years in which to enjoy them, my man."

Mooney never could tell afterward whether he walked out of the superintendent's office, or just floated out.

This strange story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

A Double Loss.

A man who had just finished a comfortable meal at a restaurant the other evening suddenly rose from his chair, caught up his hat and an umbrella that stood against the wall and rushed out of the building.

"Stop him!" exclaimed the proprietor. "That fellow went out without paying."

"I'll stop him," said a determined-looking man, who rose up hastily from a table near where the other had sat. "He took my gold-headed umbrella. I'll stop him and I'll bring him back in charge of a police officer, the scoundrel!"

Without a moment's pause he dashed out of the house in hot pursuit of the conscienceless villain. And the proprietor, a cold, hard, unsympathetic kind of man, somehow begun to suspect that neither of them will ever come back.

Amanda.

Col. Harta Beetem, occupying the choicest window of the Necks of Nature Club, sipping his personally directed drink of zebu's milk and gin, remarked: "Well, gentlemen, these hot days make me think of little Amanda. Poor little thing!"

"Some relative of yours, Colonel?" yawned Bulther Twizzles.

"Hardly," smiled the Colonel sweetly. "No, little Amanda was a common house fly, or rather uncommon, the only trained fly, I believe I can safely say, ever heard of in the history of man.

"I caught and trained Amanda in the Wumborian district of India, and she was really very useful, for I was a heavy sleeper and promptly at sunrise each morning little Amanda used to light on the end of my nose and leap up and down in a perfect frenzy, till, half awake and half asleep, I would slap at my nose viciously. Then you ought to see that little fly sidestep just in time! Enjoyed it mightily, she did, and would keep the game going till I was awake and up. No other flies were allowed in my tent, for flies, as you know, are India's greatest menace, altho Amanda was extraordinarily clean in her habits. You can see it was a most extraordinary mark of devotion for her to stay with me when there were no other little flies allowed in to play with her.

"Finally, because I simply couldn't break her of the habit of laying eggs, I had to have her asphyxiated." And the Colonel pensively sipped the remainder of his zebu's milk and gin and sighed again.

* * *

Their Answers.

The Century once gave some examples of humor in school. The study of anatomy seems to cause confusion, as witness these examples from examination papers:

"Circulation is a beet that goes all over the body."

"Cause of narrow chests is most female folks tie in their waists."

"You should not work either before or after eating."

"We should not drink hot water and then cold, because it cracks the tartar on the teeth."

"The teeth should be washed after every meal to remove any articles that may be in them."

"Round shoulders are caused by leaning on the stomach."

* * *

Of Course.

Hogan the elder was doing useful work in the stables, since most of the younger men in the little market town had enlisted.

One day he was sent by his employer to telephone to a dealer for various loads of hay, straw and oats. After many struggles with that terrible instrument which is supposed to save time, he got into communication with the dealers at last.

"I say, we're waitin' fer that last order fer hay, straw and oats! We want it at once! Hay, straw and oats!"

Back came the answer:

"Very good! But who's it for?"

"Arr, now! Would ye try to be funny with an ould man what's doing his bit? It's fer the horses, av course!"

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THE QUADROON'S HATE

Or, One Man's Folly

By Ella Martin

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CHAPTER XXI.

AVON'S MEETING WITH ELECTRA.

FOR a space Avon Walters and Electra, the mulatto, regarded each other in speechless surprise. Avon had had his suspicions, and was on his way to verify them; but he had not expected to meet with the very person he wished most to see, because from her he could gain the information he sought.

"You!" he finally ejaculated. "Well, now that we have met again, we will have a settlement right here and now. There are some things I want to know, and I want the truth, mind you. Did you read that note before giving it to your mistress?"

The mulatto stared at him in surprise, but did not answer.

"Sit down," he invited, pointing to the steps of the stile set in the fence that marked the boundary of the two ranches. "Now, tell me," he continued, as he seated himself beside her, "who else saw that note?"

"Nobody saw it, 'zactly," Electra hesitatingly replied, rolling her big eyes so that the whites of them glistened in the moonlight.

"Then explain to me how Mr. Lynd's presence in the neighborhood came to be known in time for an enemy to assassinate him."

"Well, marse, yo' see, it were all on account ob dat good-fer-nothin' Sam, what belongs to de Charlstons."

"Ah, yes; I see. You told him all about it."

"Yes, I did. I 'spected him to keep his fool mouf shet. He were predendin' ter be my sweetheart; and he jest wormed it outer me, as Miss Nepha puts it. She done told me what had happened, and dat Sam were pickin' me in Marse Charlston's interests, and laffin' bout how easy it were ter fool me. I done shipped dat nigger, I did, an' took Mose fer a sweetheart ter spite him—yes, suh!"

"Yes; I have seen Mose, and I think he is worth two like Sam."

"Huh, he am worth more den dat. I'm gwine ter marry Mose, I is, when Miss Ila gits well, an' I kin go back."

"Where is your young mistress now?" he asked casually. He feared she was not at liberty to impart information concerning the Hastings. But Electra was only too glad to tell.

"She an' all de folks am at de next ranch with Mistiss Mainard. I were on my way to der ranch-house ter find out whar Marse Lynd am. Miss Ila am boun' ter fin' whether he am libin' or daid."

"I will go back to Miss Mainard's with you," he said, rising abruptly, "and tell them myself. Mr. Lynd is alive and well, and more than anxious to find them."

"Praise de Lawd!" exclaimed the girl. "All de trouble am ended!"

Electra followed him across the fields till they came to the great rambling building owned by Miss Mainard. It stood in the shade of trees and presented a homelike appearance. The front yard was grassy, and old-fashioned flowers lined the walk leading to the front entrance. On the broad, front porch, in a reclining chair, with soft draperies about her, sat Ila Hastings.

She drew a quick breath as Avon stepped to her side. Her soft violet eyes flew to his with an eager gaze.

"Oh," she breathed, "it is you! At last—at last I shall learn something definite. Tell me quickly—does he live?"

Avon laughed softly, as he took her hand. "Indeed, he is very much alive, and will certainly become livelier when he learns that you are so near to him. He has not been able to return until now. We tried to get trace of you, but failed. He will tell you everything tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" she echoed. "And he has just come back from the dead! At least, so it seems to me. It is not late yet. Papa!" she called, and Mr. Hastings came out onto the porch. "Order the car to take Mr. Walters home, will you? And Lois—where is Lois? She would like to ride with you, this moonlight night, I am sure. Oh, I am so happy!"

Avon smiled and gave her a grateful look, one that showed her that he appreciated her effort to bring Lois and him together. Meanwhile, he shook hands with Mr. Hastings, who was cordial in his greeting, tho his manner was grave, as it could scarcely help being under the circumstances.

"I will call Lois," he said, after listening to Avon's explanation, and left them to order the car.

Avon lingered by Ila's side until he heard Lois' step in the hall. Then, with a hasty apology, he left her and stepped inside, to come face to face with the girl he loved. She gave a little gasp of surprise, but found herself in his arms before she hardly realized he was there.

"My darling!" he whispered.

"Oh," she cried, struggling away from his clasp, "I did not know it was you!"

"Then I am jealous of the man you thought I was. You let me kiss you. Tell me who he is. I want to kill him!"

"You have been killing a lot of time somewhere," she chided. "We have had to come in search of you, Ila and I. Avon, what has become of Cecil? We thought he might have come home, if he still lived, and for Ila's sake my father brought us here. We did not know until he showed us the tickets that it was to Aunt Ruth's we were coming. We thought he intended taking us to some health resort, where my sister might recover."

"It was the wisest thing to do—to bring her here. The sight of Cecil alive will beat a health resort all hollow. We only arrived a few hours ago."

"Aunt Ruth was sure you were not here yesterday, but to please my sister she sent Electra over tonight."

"Yes, I met her while on my way to learn if you were here. One of the boys mentioned seeing two young ladies out walking. He believed they were newcomers, and I thought of you at once. Cecil was too weary with the journey to notice what was said, and I wanted to make sure before arousing his hopes. The mental strain he has been laboring under has been the means of retarding his recovery. He has been on a nervous tension continually because of the uncertainty of your sister's fate. We are going after him now—you and I and the chauffeur. He will be elated when he learns that the ones we had vowed to find, if we had to search the wide world over, are here at our very door, just where we meant to corral them."

Lois glanced at him archly. "Don't you think you took a whole lot for granted? Of course Ila is Cecil's sweetheart——"

"And you are mine! Tell me that you are not, if you can—if you dare!"

"I don't like contention," Lois faltered, her dark eyes falling before his ardent gaze.

"And so you will yield," he laughed happily. "Well, then it's all settled. Come," and he drew her hand within his arm. "I hear the chug-chug of the machine."

Suddenly he stopped, and under the hall lamp looked at her quizzically. "Wait just a minute," he said. "Tho it won't make a bit of difference, as I intend to wed you anyway, yet I would like your promise to marry me. It's almost necessary to be engaged first, isn't it?"

Lois smiled and shyly whispered the necessary assent, with her face against his shoulder and his arms about her.

The ride in the tonneau over the smooth prairie roads, with the moonlight turning everything to beauty, was the happiest experience of their lives. As long as Lois lived she never forgot that ride nor the touch of the breeze on her cheeks. It was all like fairyland, with the prince of the fairies beside her.

As the cluster of trees in front of the ranch-house loomed up in the distance Lois began to realize what this night's events meant to her sister. How happy Cecil and Ila would be, now that everything had turned out all right!

"Oh," she said, with a quick intake of her breath, "is it all over—the trouble, the dreary waiting? Is the mystery of Cecil's disappearance solved at last?"

Avon, who was holding her hand in his firm clasp, gazed at the lovely, upturned face with sparkling eyes.

"All over," he replied, cheerfully. "Forget it!"

He could afford to be light-hearted, for out of the terrible experience he had gained his heart's desire—the one he had never hoped to win.

"What happened at the Crossroads that night is still a mystery in the community where it occurred, and is likely to remain so. Only those most concerned will ever know the details. As to who the assassin is, only Nepha, the quadroon, holds the key to the mystery. I am going to see about that some day."

They had reached their destination, and Avon, bidding Lois keep her seat, ran up the steps of the ranch-house and entered Cecil's room impetuously. His

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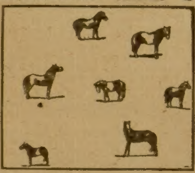

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friend was sitting on the edge of the couch, his chin resting in the palm of one hand, his elbow on his knee, while his dark eyes were fixed upon the floor, as he reviewed past events with his mind's eye.

"Whom do you think I ran across while strolling for recreation in the moonlight?" Avon exclaimed, preparatory to breaking the good news to him.

"Well," queried Cecil listlessly, "whom did you run across? The King of Spain, or his Satanic Majesty? You are crazy to tell, so why don't you unburden yourself at once?"

"Neither the King of Spain nor of Hades. It was a woman."

Cecil's interest leaped suddenly into life. He began to comprehend. "Out with it, Avon," he commanded. "What do you think my nerves are made of? Steel?"

"Don't be excited, man. It was only Electra, the mulatto to whom I delivered the note you sent to Ila Hastings two months ago."

Cecil sprang to his feet. "Electra? Why, then Ila must be here, at her aunt's!"

"Just so. I found Lois and Ila both at Aunt Ruth's—your aunt and mine, before long. Eh, Cecil? Come on, old man, we must go over and see the old lady." And he pulled Cecil, who really needed no urging, to the door. "The car is waiting, and—well, I might as well tell you—Lois is outside."

"Alone?" There was disappointment in Cecil's voice.

"Certainly. You didn't expect Ila to chase after you, did you? She is waiting for you to come to her. In fact, she sent for you—at least I understood it that way. Anyway, I am going to take you back with me. You may sit with the driver," he added, as Cecil rushed up to the auto and caught Lois' hand, looking for all the world as if he meant to kiss her.

"No," Lois objected, "there is room for him, too. Get in beside me, Cecil. My, but I am glad to see you!"

"Listen to that!" from Avon. "She didn't say that to me."

"You see we thought you were dead," continued Lois.

"Oh, don't try to smooth it over. Go on and look at him to your heart's content."

Lois laughed without answering, and the car started up, turning with a graceful swing toward the adjoining ranch. As the auto drew up in front of the house Cecil sprang out and disappeared into the shadows enveloping the veranda where Ila sat waiting. Avon and Lois lingered, walking slowly up the path, while the chauffeur took the car around to the garage. The meeting between the two who had planned a tryst at the Crossroads two months before was over when the loiterers came up, just as they had intended it would be. Cecil was sitting beside her, holding one slim hand in both his own.

"Is it really you?" she was saying, with a catch in her voice. "I saw you at the Crossroads—dead, I supposed."

"Don't think of it, dear," he whispered tenderly, as he saw the reminiscent shudder that passed over her. "It belongs to the past, and we have both come back to a world of new-found happiness."

A moment later they went into the house together to see Aunt Ruth. And so it happened that Lois and Avon took possession of the cozy nook they had vacated. There was perfect understanding between all concerned in the late tragedy of circumstances, and the tangles all straightened themselves out rapidly.

Later the two men walked home together in preference to riding in the car that was proffered them. They had taken a short cut, and as they reached the stile they found Electra, the mulatto, waiting. She rose from her seat and caught Cecil by the hand.

"Forgib me, Marse Lynd!" she cried. "Forgib me, an' I'll tell yo' eberyting. Sam tole me after it were too late. I knows who tried ter kill yo' at de Crossroads, I does. Git Miss Ila ter send me home to Mose and his folks, an' I will make Sam tell der truth, 'deed, I will. Dey wants me at Negro Jim's, dey all done tell me so."

Cecil saw how excited the girl was, and how homesick, and promised to use his influence with her young mistress. The girl turned away satisfied, and Avon and Cecil looked at each other.

"Shall we follow this up and unravel the mystery of the assault upon me?" Cecil inquired. "Or shall we let it drop?"

"Well," replied Avon, thoughtfully, as they turned and walked on again, "I advise you to remain here. You and Ila both have just returned from 'the valley of the shadow of death.' You need rest and quiet—and each other. As for me, I am in need of adventure, to work off some of my exhilaration of spirits. Besides, Lois' regard for me needs a chance to expand, and 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.' And I promised Nepha, the quadroon, to—well, I promised about everything she asked of me, which was considerable."

"Out of pure gallantry, I suppose?"

"Partly, and partly from gratitude for what she did for you. And I never break a promise. This matter ought to be sifted to the bottom; but the quadroon and I will attend to it. You and Ila just get busy and choose a site on which to erect a mansion. Lois will help you select one for us—for there is going to be a double wedding before long—and I will take Electra back, both for her own sake and for Mose's, for Negro Jim's folks were mighty good friends to us. And before I return I will fulfill my promise to Nepha, our star friend and helper, by fighting that duel with her enemy and yours."

"But suppose you get killed in that duel?"

"In that event, just see that my grave's kept green."

"But one does get killed in duels, sometimes."

"But not in one's imagination beforehand; or else there would be none fought. It is not bravery that leads men to face each other in combat; it's conceit—confidence in one's own ability—what you will. Each is sure he is the better marksman, and there you are."

There was little more said on the subject, for Cecil saw that he was not likely to turn his friend from his purpose, and believing he was able to take care of himself, he made no further comments.

It was scarcely a week later that Avon, accompanied by Electra, whom Ila was loath to part with, started on the long journey back to Virginia.

CHAPTER XXII.

AUNT ANNA'S CONFESSION.

IT WAS evening in the west chamber, overlooking the shaded river, at Charlston Hall. Miss Charlston, the white-haired old lady, known to every one about the place as Aunt Anna, lay dying. The servants had all bidden her a tearful farewell, and only the family, consisting of Nepha, Lloyd and Lygia, were gathered around her bed.

Lloyd Charlston had taken the one course open to him—acknowledged Lygia as his wife, and she and her child had been for some weeks now domiciled in his ancestral home. He knew that Nepha was still his Nemesis, that he was still under her surveillance. Living or dead, she menaced him, and he hated her for it. But he had remained in hiding until he was weary of that sort of life.

They were all gathered together now with the understanding that they were to hear a deathbed confession. There was only curiosity depicted on the faces of those present, for none suspected that that which they were to hear was a matter of life and death to one of their number. There was genuine grief in the hearts of the half-brother and sister, for Miss Charlston had been the best friend either of them had ever had.

Nepha knelt beside the bed, holding the wrinkled hand in hers, bathing it with tears and covering it with kisses.

"Listen," said the low voice of Aunt Anna. "I have that to tell you which will concern all present. I have kept the secret locked in my breast, Lloyd, for your sake; tho I have known all along that I could not go to my grave with the truth unrevealed. You are both my brother's children. But you, Lloyd, are not superior to Nepha in any way; for you, also, were born out of wedlock."

Lloyd Charlston, who had been sitting by her bedside, sprang erect, but he did not speak, and the low voice went on: "It is because you were legally adopted that you reign here as master.

"The mistress, my brother's wife, died of a broken heart while still young and beautiful. For she loved my brother with a fatal love. He was not unkind in his manner toward her. But he deceived her and placated her with lying denials and promises. And in spite of my pleadings and hers he became utterly reckless and degraded. He outraged her love in every way imaginable. When you were born, Lloyd, your mother died; and he brought you, a helpless infant, to his wife, and wheedled her into claiming you as her own to save him from trouble. She forgave him that time, as he promised to do better. But when, a few years later, he brought Nepha to her, and she learned that she was the child of his father's servant, a freed slave, she refused to hush up the scandal by taking the child to bring up. She fled from his home, and died a short time later beneath her parents' roof in another State.

"I reared Nepha myself, but answered no questions concerning her parentage, tho it was generally believed that she was illegitimate."

The woman paused and closed her eyes wearily, as her breathing became more labored. Lloyd bent over her.

"You have been a good mother to us both, Aunt Anna," he said. "All that you have told me need not have been disclosed. It can serve no good purpose. Why tire yourself?"

His aunt struggled to an upright position, in which Nepha immediately supported her.

"You have not heard all yet," she gasped. "And tho I know the knowledge I am about to impart will be a tool of revenge in Nepha's hands, that it will cut your pride to the quick, yet in justice to her I must proclaim you that which in truth you are—a man of quarter blood, and therefore, like the girl you despise—a quadroon!"

Lloyd Charlston sprang back with a stifled cry, his eyes darting anger, even at the dying woman.

"It is a lie!" he cried. "Your mind is wandering."

"The proofs are in my desk," Aunt Anna replied faintly.

She sank back exhausted, and Nepha lowered her gently to the pillows, where she lay weak and silent, her breathing labored. But her nephew gave no thought to her condition. He was stirred with the anger of a madman. He struck his fists together vehemently.

"Is it not enough," he cried, "that I should be half-brother to one of mixed blood? That I should unwittingly have married a quadroon, and worst of all, brought into being one with the negro strain? Is it not enough—all this? How I hate the thoughts of this degradation! You have kept me in ignorance of the truth only to drag me down to the level of the race I despise!"

"It was not wholly my fault that you were reared in ignorance of it, but it is my will that you should be told the truth now," she panted. "My conscience will not permit me to go into the Great Beyond allowing you to believe yourself superior to one who is your equal in every respect. But for your arrogance on account of your mistaken belief, I might have done so. Remember that pride goeth before a fall!"

Nepha, the quadroon, rose from her kneeling position and released the hand she had been holding—a hand that was fast growing cold in the icy chilliness of death. She drew herself up proudly and gazed across the bed, straight into her half-brother's eyes, with a triumphant, almost diabolical smile. It seemed as tho she was looking down upon the man

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NEW YORK, N. Y.—Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact a young man he really was notwithstanding his age. The secret he said was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46, careworn and nearly all in. Now at 50 a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. As I have said a hundred times over iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more or less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test. See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of persons, run-down people who were ailing all the while, double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months, without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can easily be absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete or prizefighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while many another has gone down to inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.—E. Sauer, M. D.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, recommended above by Dr. Sauer, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach, on the contrary, it is the most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all druggists.

who had endeavored for years to trample her under his feet—as if she placed him beneath her now, and gloried in his descent.

That glance stung Lloyd Charlston into an insane fury. It was Nepha's opinion he cared for, in this instance, more than any other's; for it was she whom he had tried to make feel his superiority. Even tho he had scorned her, as only a Southerner can scorn one of African blood, he had always recognized her intelligence and gloried in being able to lord it over her.

After that one speaking glance at the crestfallen man, Nepha ignored his presence and sank on her knees once more beside the dying woman, who lay very still now, her face growing ashen with the approach of death.

"Oh, Aunt Anna!" gasped Nepha, gratefully, "bless you for taking the right stand at last. You have removed the poison fangs of hate from the mouth of mine enemy, and made harmless his vicious strikes!"

She bent over and kissed the damp forehead, almost as the last breath fluttered from the pale lips.

Lygia had stood there silent, motionless, dreading what was yet to come, tho she had no prescience of what it was to be. After straightening the body and folding the hands to rest across the pulseless heart. Nepha looked up. Lloyd Charlston was gone. So quietly had he slipped from the room that neither she nor Lygia was aware of it. Nepha's startled eyes flew to Lygia's face. The latter was bewildered, but Nepha suspected his intentions.

"Come," she instructed, and closed the door softly, leaving the dead in the chamber alone.

Like a wild creature she flew along the hall toward the nursery, where little Lloyd was at play. Even while she ran she snatched the pistol from her breast. But at that very moment two shots rang out, issuing from the nursery, followed by the sound of a fall and the scream of a woman. Then unbroken silence.

"We are too late!" breathed Nepha. "Poor Lloyd, poor baby!' Then Lygia awoke to the meaning of it all.

"He has killed himself and the child," she cried, "that the blood he so hated and despised might not be perpetuated in his descendants."

"And but for this," Nepha said, brandishing the revolver, "and the fact that he knew I was quicker than he, we would both have preceded him into the Unknown."

The nurse was in hysterics as Nepha pushed open the door, and gazed around with horror-filled eyes. For there lay Lloyd Charlston, the once haughty master of the Hall, prone upon the floor with a bullet-hole in his temple from which the blood was flowing.

One glance, and then the eyes of the two women searched the room for the little form which they expected to find stretched in the throes of death. But there he sat among the scattered toys, safe and sound and smiling. Lygia caught him to her breast with a sob of thankfulness. And the love that had made her pliable in the hands of her husband turned to resentment at the realization of what he had intended to do. For only a miraculous chance had saved the child's life.

"Jest as Marse Charlston aimed de gun de boy ducked his haid to reach a toy," explained the nurse, "an' de bullet fly ober him an' strike de wall. Marse didn't wait to see, but blowed him own brains out quick, when he hear your footsteps running dis way."

"Ah, then, I saved him!" cried Nepha. "He feared my interference, or he would have made sure of killing the boy first. Rose, go and tell Sam to inform the authorities. Come, Lygia, this is no place for you!

"But," she added, triumphantly, lingering behind, until her sister was out of hearing, "it has come to pass—my oath. I am avenged! And little Lloyd, my sister's child, is now master of Charlston Hall!"

* * * * * * *

It was a dark, gloomy day that the double funeral took place. The aunt and nephew were laid together in the family lot beside the former master of Charlston, and were at rest.

There was gloom among the servants, not because they mourned the sudden taking off of one they had feared instead of loved, but they were uncertain of their own future. They realized that Nepha, the quadroon, would now be the ruling spirit of the place, and they expected to be dismissed. But their minds were soon set at rest, for Nepha called them together and informed them that until the present heir had grown to majority, life for them would go on the same, under her own and her sister's management.

The neighbors had been very sympathetic toward Lloyd Charlston's beautiful widow and orphaned son. None dreamed that the master had a reason to take his own life, but believed the shooting was accidental. No one ever learned the secret of his birth, as Nepha destroyed the papers in her aunt's desk, and kept the family skeleton locked securely in its closet, that no stigma might rest upon Baby Lloyd, the heir to Charlston Hall.

It was shortly after the funeral that Avon Walters came once more to Hastings Place, bringing Electra with him. Leaving her there with her fellow servants, with a prospect of an early meeting with Mose, Avon went at once to call upon Nepha, the quadroon. She greeted him warmly and presented him to her sister, who offered him the hospitality of the house. After serving him with refreshments Nepha took him thru the grove and pointed to a churchyard across the river. For she knew wherefore he had come.

"You are too late," she told him. "He lies there—the one you see—a suicide. He is beyond the reach of your vengeance and mine. Once my heart would have thrilled at the thought of your coming to avenge my wrongs and those of Cecil Lynd. But I was obliged to forego my revenge, and have come to believe it is better as it is. His blood is upon his own head instead of upon ours. And I shall be content and happy now that he is dead."

"Will you tell me why you hated him?"

"Yes. You are a gentleman, and will keep my secret."

"I swear it," avowed Avon, the spell of her personality upon him.

The quadroon drew him to a seat beside the river's brink, and told him the whole story—all the wrongs and humiliation she had suffered at the hands of her half-brother, who despised those over whom he ruled, and his persecution of her because he could not bring her beneath the yoke of his authority on account of his aunt's protection.

"He was a strange man," she concluded. "Tho he was three-quarters white, his heart was wholly black. He was shocked into greater hatred of me when he learned that we had the same father. Finally, he was so wrought up at finding himself, on his mother's side, an offspring of the alien race he hated, that he blew out his brains. His hatred of the colored race was as great as mine of him."

"Nepha," said Avon, "leave all these disgusting memories behind you, and come with me to the wide, free West. It will facilitate your spiritual growth. Out there, while living the unconventional life of the prairies, no one thinks of what the neighbors will say. Your soul has been stunted within you. You need a change."

"The change is here," she replied quickly. "I already feel like a new person. I am sunning my warped soul in the love and trust of my sister and her child. My duty lies here; and by working for their interest I shall reap a harvest of affection. My friends in the depths of the woods, who once sheltered us, are as dear to me as ever. So you see I have quite enough to live for. To make my nephew a fitting master of his ancestral home is my one aim in life; to help train him to be a better man than his father will be my life's work. And while devoting my time to the service of the ones I love, I hope to crush out the bitterness in my own disposition.

"I intend to do what I can for the advancement of the colored people in my service. But there is one thing I will not tolerate—and that is a traitor. Sam has been dismissed, and has gone out into the world to seek a new home. He has promised to reform, for the loss of Electra was a great disappointment to him, and is his punishment. He was anxious to go away, since Mose has won her from him."

"I have brought Electra back to Hastings Place," Avon said. "She was bound to come."

"Oh," exclaimed Nepha, "then——"

"Yes, the Hastings family are all at Miss Mainard's ranch. Hastings Place is already sold, and the servants will change hands, all except Electra, who is to be married to Mose in a few weeks. I expect you will get an invitation to the wedding."

"I am sure of it!" cried Nepha. "I must go to Negro Jim's tomorrow, and congratulate them all."

"You may congratulate me right now," Avon laughed; "I am going to marry Lois as soon as I get back to Montana."

"Oh, I am so glad!" breathed the quadroon, with a little awe in her voice. She had feared that Lois' happiness was wrecked by Lloyd Charlston's treachery. "The Hastings family will never come back, I suppose."

"No; they have bought a ranch near Miss Mainard's with what they realized from Hastings Place, and are satisfied to remain in the West permanently. Mr. Hastings feels that all that occurred here has created a public scandal, and the place is hateful to him."

They walked back thru the grove together. And a little later Nepha, the quadroon, stood and watched him go down the avenue toward the Crossroads. Then she turned and went into the house to Lygia and little Lloyd, with a quiet calm in her hitherto tempestuous heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

IT WAS at Aunt Ruth's that the double wedding took place. It was a moonlight evening near Christmas time, and the air was crisp and bracing. The great building, with its wide porticoes, standing in the shadow of trees planted there decades ago, when the mistress was young, looked ghostlike in the silvery radiance that bathed the country round in one great deluge of glory.

The rooms were decorated with sprigs of pine and sprays of lichen, with trailing vines of evergreen interwoven with flowers from the sunny Southland that Nepha and Electra had sent for the occasion.

Mr. and Mrs. Hastings seemed to have caught the spirit of the West, and were quietly hilarious and interested in every little detail of the wedding. Mrs. Hastings, stately and gracious, as on that other night, went to the chamber of her daughters to assist in giving the final touches to the wedding toilets. She could not help rejoicing at the contrast of this bridal night and that other, not so many months before. She shuddered when she remembered the disastrous result of her scheme to change brides, that she might at least bring happiness to one of her daughters. She was glad now that her plans had failed.

She could not regret that Lloyd Charlston, the man who had caused all the trouble and heart-breaking misery, was dead, for Avon Walters had, with Nepha's permission, told them the story she had confided to him.

"Lloyd Charlston was mad from his birth," Mr. Hastings had commented, after listening to all that had happened at the Hall, "and as irresponsible as his father before him. I see it now."

And as he led the two girls, his firstborn first, then the child of his second marriage, up under the floral bell, and handed them over to the happy bridegrooms, he thanked God in his heart that Fate had stepped in and foiled his attempt to marry either of them to the profligate he had chosen because of his millions.

"At last!" Cecil whispered, as at the end of the ceremony he lifted the veil to place his nuptial kiss upon his bride's lips.

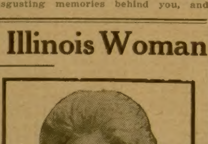
And Ila, as he led her away thru the throng of guests, for all the neighbors within twenty miles had gathered to watch the nuptials, smiled into his eager eyes and answered: "At last, all is well!"

A Letter From an Illinois Woman

Mrs. Margaret Boyd of 4508 N. Whipple St., Chicago, Ill., writes: "I want to say that Dr. Pierce's medicines are the very best that have ever been put before the public. I refer to the 'Golden Medical Discovery,' 'Favorite Prescription' and 'Pleasant Pellets,' for they have done so much for me for twenty years. I had been troubled with woman's trouble and it terminated in nervous prostration. About that time I heard of a lady who was taking the 'Favorite Prescription' and so I thought I would try and see what it would do for me. I went to a drug store and bought five bottles of 'Golden Medical Discovery' and six of 'Favorite Prescription' and kept myself supplied with the 'Pleasant Pellets,' and today I am free from all of that suffering, owing to Dr. Pierce's Splendid medicines."

One nice thing about Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and Favorite Prescription, they contain no alcohol or narcotic nor any harmful ingredient. Put up in liquid and tablets and sold by druggists.

Another woman adds her testimony: Mrs. Martha E. Steaurt, 436 State St., Quincy, Ill., says: "For quite a few years I have used Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets in my family for cases of sluggish liver and constipation and I have never known an instance of griping or other unpleasant sensation. They are a



MRS. MARGARET BOYD.

mild, but very efficient, liver tonic and purgative, and I am glad to recommend them."

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Avon and Lois, who followed them down the aisle, away from the improvised altar, were just as happy, and even more merry. As soon as they were by themselves for a moment, Avon said:

"You are caged at last, my bird. The confines of the ranch are the bounds of your freedom. Farther than that you may not go—without me."

"Farther than that I would not dare to go—alone," laughed Lois.

Then the guests sat down to a sumptuous dinner, which Aunt Ruth had provided. The feast was a merry one; the jests and laughter were followed by toasts, and after the repast, by music and song. And then the dance was on. Miss Mainard, a white-haired little woman, lithe and straight as an arrow, trod a measure with the foreman of her ranch. After that one dance she made an elaborate bow, which included the whole assemblage in its sweep.

"I must bid you good night," she said, her merry blue eyes twinkling. "I go to my rest. I beg you to remember that I am not as young as I used to be, and that this is strenuous pleasure for one of my age. Make yourselves quite at home, one and all."

With this she left them and went to her chamber. And the revel went on, for Mrs. Hastings was left in her place as hostess, and the unconventional ways of the community permitted every one perfect freedom of action.

After a while, when the dance broke up, automobiles took the guests to their respective homes; while the two couples who had been joined in wedlock that night were driven to the station to take the early morning train for the East, where they were to spend their honeymoon. We will withdraw and leave the happy pairs to enjoy it.

The End.

* * *

RELAXATION.

Jes' foolin' 'round! De sun drifts by
Till shadders gather in de sky.
De water ripples on its way
A-singin' sof'ly at its play.
De butterfly wif tremblin' wing
Is envious of de birds dat sing.
An' ev'ything in sight or sound
Seems only jes' a-foolin' 'round.

Jes' foolin' 'round. De day must come
When winds will blow an' skies be glum;
When every minute as it flies
May lose or win some precious prize.
But while it's June dis old world seems
Disposed to triflin' an' to dreams,
Forgettin' matters mo' profound;
Jes' satisfied to fool around.

* * *

A QUIET TIME.

"I thought you said you weren't going away this season," observed the caller, "and now you seem to be packing up."

"We had no intention of going anywhere," Mrs. Wilkinson said, as she sank into a chair with a tired sigh. "We were so pleased with this new apartment and we'd had so many extra expenses that we thought we should have a quiet time at home, where we could be comfortable and not have to dress and fuss and go sightseeing. Nothing tires Mr. Wilkinson so much as sightseeing, and he always spends too much on taxis when we go away, because he says his brain is too worn out to tell his feet where to go. And we always take the wrong street cars when away from home. Once in Brooklyn we were three hours getting to a place that could have been reached in a taxi in twenty minutes."

"Oh, well, of course everybody knows what Brooklyn is," said the caller. "The Brooklyn conductors don't know where they live themselves."

"Anyhow, we thought it would be a measure of economy and a very nice rest staying at home, especially with such cool weather as we were enjoying this spring. So we fixed up the back porch and we got a set of iced tea glasses and Mr. Wilkinson subscribed to some of the entertaining magazines that he usually considers too light reading for winter. We were enthusiastic, especially when I finished some simple summer gowns that are pretty and dainty and cool but not at all the fancy sort of thing one has to have at a hotel or when visiting."

"Laundry counts up so when one is away," suggested the caller.

"Indeed it does," Mrs. Wilkinson agreed fervently. "Well, we had just completed our arrangements for a quiet season when I had a letter from my husband's Aunt Martha announcing that she expected to be in town for a week or more, but of course she would go to a boarding-house if we would send her the address of one. Naturally I wrote at once telling her to come here, and she came. She is just as nice as can be, and we enjoyed her so much that we urged her to stay two weeks. She did stay and we were very glad. Mr. Wilkinson took several days off to show her the town, and we went to the theater and the movies and had just as good a time as Aunt Martha seemed to be having herself.

"We were still talking about her visit when my cousin Adele came to stay five days. She was on her way West to live with a brother on a ranch, and of course we realized that it was probably the last time she would visit anywhere. You know, when people go to live out West they almost never come back. I don't understand why, but somehow they don't care for us any more."

"That's so. My husband's brother is on one now."

"It was on that account that we did the very best we could to give her a memorable time and I guess she had it. Mr. Wilkinson was quite tired out because of having to work nights to make up for the sprees the three of us took when she was with us."

"It's exhausting when a man has to burn the candle at both ends."

"It is for anybody," Mrs. Wilkinson said. "Three days after she went my niece passed thru on her way to take some course at a summer school, and I spent a week going to lectures with her. She speaks French and Spanish, and she paid for my ticket to the lectures in those languages, so that I couldn't object, tho I can't say I understood much. I felt a bit ungrateful, so I told her I understood some of it all. I didn't say just what I understood, but, to tell the truth, the only words I did understand were 'Chicago' and 'Theodore Roosevelt.'

"Her visit was followed quickly by that of Mr. Wilkinson's Cousin Sarah, and her husband and little girl. Of course they were here only a week-end, but that was long enough for that child to break all my iced-tea glasses but one, and to leave dents in my mahogany that I shall never eradicate.

"We heaved a sigh of relief when they left, and Mr. Wilkinson and I went downtown to dinner to celebrate, but when we got home we found a wire from my great-aunt saying that she expected to be with us for four days and wished to be met that evening at 11:45."

"What a heathenish time o' night!" interjected the caller.

"Yes, and the train was an hour late," laughed Mrs. Wilkinson. "My husband was sort of grim all the time she was here, especially when she asked for extra dishes at meals, not seeming to like what we had, or when she grabbed the morning papers and did not give him a piece.

"When the door closed on her he said that was to be the last one, but the very next morning we had a letter from my sister saying she'd be here with her three children next week. I'm awfully fond of my sister, and I was about to write to her to hurry along when I heard from Adele again.

"She said her brother had sold the ranch, and she was going to spend the rest of the summer with us. When Mr. Wilkinson read that letter he made not the slightest complaint, but went to the telephone and engaged berths on an eastbound train and called the expressman for the trunks. He said he didn't know where we were going, but it was going to be a place that would be quieter and less expensive than home."

* * *

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We guarantee to qualify you in a short time for a position as chauffeur, repair man, tester, demonstrator, garage man or automobile dealer paying from $75 to $300 monthly or refund your money.

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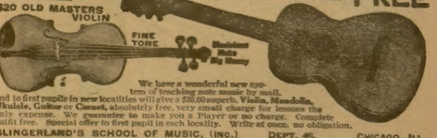

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Growing Up.

"Your daughter is getting to be quite a big girl, isn't she?"

"Yes; she's big enough now to wear short dresses."

A Temporary Relief.

"Did Gassaway enjoy his vacation at the seashore?"

"I don't know; but his friends in town did."

A STORY WITHOUT WORDS

Quite So.

"The graphophone is a great invention."

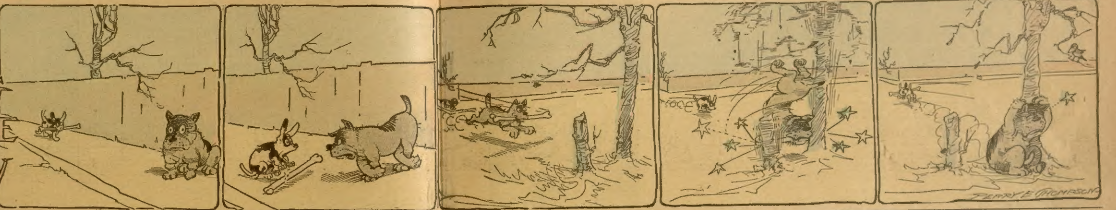
"It is that. Even a confirmed old maid may have somebody sing her a love song."

Made Up.

Mrs. Flatbush—"She tells everybody her face is her fortune."

Mrs. Bensonhurst—"Well, she's made it nearly all herself."

OUR MOVING PICTURE SHOW

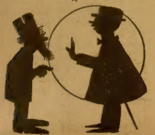


The Important Point.

Sentimental Daughter—"He was overcome with emotion, pa. Every feature in his face was working when he asked me to marry him."

Practical Pa—"That's all right, but I want to see his hands do some of the working."

* * *



Fortune Teller—"For a dollar I will foretell your future, sir."

Gentleman—"Are you a genuine fortune teller?"

Fortune Teller—"I am."

Gentleman—"Then you ought to know that I haven't a dollar!"

Not a Good Remedy.

Mrs. A.—"You say brandy's a good remedy for colic, but I don't agree with you."

Mrs. B.—"What do you know about it?"

Mrs. A.—"A great deal. Before I began to keep brandy in the house my husband seldom had colic, but now he has it almost every day."

And Another Fourth.

Bacon—"I see about one-fourth of the area of the United States is still covered by forests."

Egbert—"And another fourth, I expect, by mortgages."

The Strange Effect.

It all originated at a small grocery store where they sold everything from sand to a pearl necklace. A farmer had gone for some liniment to rub on his cow's bad leg. The bungling grocer gave the old farmer, however, a bottle of cologne instead of liniment. The day following the farmer came back in a great rage.

"Look here," he said, "I wish you'd be more careful how you chuck things over that counter. You gave me perfume yesterday instead of liniment, an' I'd put it on the blessed cow 'fore I knowed."

"I hope it hasn't done her any harm," said the grocer, in a mollifying tone.

"Harm be hanged!" snapped the farmer. "That 'ere cow won't eat now, nor allow herself to be milked. The only thing she does is to sigh the whole day long, and go and look at her reflection in the pond."

An Interrupted Nap.

Mrs. Commuter had lain awake with a headache till one o'clock. Then in the balance of the night she had responded to several calls for a drink, a doll and all the other nocturnal infantile orders. At five in the morning as she was just beginning to round out the first continuous hour of slumber, the little six-year-old girl called softly from her nearby crib:

"Mother!"

No answer. Again, a little louder: "Mother!"

Mother said nothing. Again the child's voice, this time mezzo-forte:

"Mother!"

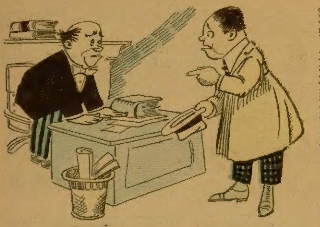
"Well, what is it?"

"Mother, isn't it too bad that one of Harry McCole's pollywogs died?"

No Lack of Advice.

"There are a great many people in this world who don't know what's good for them."

"Perhaps so," replied the cynical man, "but they always have plenty of neighbors who would gladly tell them what is good for them if they would only listen."



Railroad Attorney—"You want damages—what? Why, there isn't a scratch on you!"

Van Hardupp—"But think of the mental shock and depression at not finding a scratch on me after such a wreck!"

The Meaning of It All.

She was a sweet young thing, and having come down to see her soldier brother, who was on duty at that time, she was being taken round by his chum. She was, of course, full of questions.

"Who is that person?" she asked, pointing to a color sergeant.

"Oh! he shook hands with the King; that is why he is wearing a crown on his arm, you see!" replied the truthful man.

"And who is that?" she asked, seeing a gymnastic instructor with a badge of crossed Indian clubs.

"That is the barber; do you not see the scissors on his arm?"

Seeing yet another man with cuffs decorated with stars, she asked, "And that one?"

"Oh, he is the battalion astronomer; he guides us on night maneuvers!"

"How interesting," replied the maiden, when seeing her companion's badge, that of an ancient stringed instrument, she asked, "And does that thing mean you are the regimental liar?"

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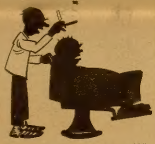


The Barber—"You seem to be bald."

The Victim—"Yes, a talkative barber became absorbed in a discussion of the war and shaved the top of my head, mistaking it for my face."

LEAP YEAR.

Now leap year wanes. Three weeks—
and then
Gone is the hope of bashful men
Who fondly dreamed that customs old
Would be recalled as maids grew bold.
In vain has youth itself bedecked
With white silk socks and trousers,
checked,
And coats that buckled in the back,
And hats that looked like bric-a-brac.
Altho they posed the summer thru
The lasses have disdained to woo.
They scorn to study Cupid's wiles;
They'd rather talk about the styles.
Not only in attire so smart,
But styles in books and modern art,
And styles in games of chance and skill
And styles in arguments that thrill
The sentiments of those who mix
Into the game of politics.
Each of them knows she is a prize
Well worthy of the brave and wise.
Tho leap year hovers o'er the land
No watchful waiter claims her hand.
He finds no favor in her view—
The man who is too proud to woo.

How He Would Manage.

A hospital nurse was testing a volunteer on his practical knowledge of first aid work.

"Now, what would you do in case a man collapsed?" she asked.

"Give him some brandy, miss," replied the man.

"But suppose you had no brandy?"

"Sure, then," he answered cheerfully, "I'd promise him some, miss!"

What Did He Mean?

Pat was servant of a farmer, and in his charge was a donkey, which was kept to amuse his employer's children. The donkey was following the farmer's wife round the yard one day, and the farmer, turning to Pat, said:

"I think the donkey is taking a liking to my wife."

"Oh," said Pat, "shure an' it's not the first donkey that's took a liking to her, sir!"

Dangerous.

Heck—A doctor says it helps digestion to laugh at your meals."

Peck—"If I were to laugh at the meals my wife prepares I'd probably get a piano thrown at my head!"

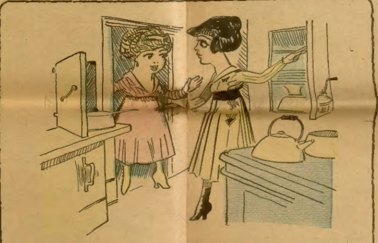
Never Again.

A recruiting sergeant stationed in the south of Ireland met Pat and asked him to join the army. The latter refused, whereupon the sergeant asked his reason for refusing.

"Aren't the King and the Kaiser cousins?" asked Pat.

"Yes," said the recruiting sergeant.

"Well," said Pat, "begor I once interfered in a family squabble and I'm not going to do so again."



Mrs. Justwed—"Yes, this is a small flat, but we have every convenience. Here is the built-in cellarette and this is our kitchenette."

Mrs. Longwed—"Where do you keep your dishes? I don't see a pantry."

Mrs. Justwed—"No, but we have this sweet little pantalette."

High Speed.

It takes a member of an alien race sometimes to make an original definition. Here is a new superlative description for speed told at Marblehead the other day while the fog held the racing yachts at anchor.

A near race riot happened in a Southern town. The negroes gathered in one crowd and the whites in another. The whites fired their revolvers into the air and the negroes took to their heels. Next day a plantation owner said to one of his men:

"Sam, were you in that crowd that gathered last night?"

"Yassir."

"Did you run like the wind, Sam?"

"No, sir. I didn't run like the wind. 'deed I didn't. But I passed two others that was running like the wind."

Just His Own Dinner.

"Will ye dine with me tomorrow?" said an Irishman to his friend.

"Faith an' I will, with all my heart."

"Remember, 'tis only a family dinner I'm asking you to."

"And what about that. A family dinner is a mighty pleasant thing. What have ye got?"

"Och, nothing very uncommon. Just an illigant pack of corned beef and potatoes."

"By the powers, that bates the world! Just my own dinner to a hair—barring the beef."

Discretion.

"I say, Dick, lend me another ten, will you?"

"Heavens! Why don't you go to work and earn money?"

"Don't dare to, my boy. People would think the governor had disinherited me, and that would ruin my credit."

On the Jump.

"You look all worried and fagged out."

"It's that current history class I foolishly joined."

"History?"

"History is being made faster than we can study it."

A Crusher.

"I saw your wife and daughter the other day, but they didn't see me."

"So they said."

The Right Way.

A certain negro lad had been brought into an Alabama police court for the fifth time charged with stealing chickens. The magistrate determined to appeal to the boy's father.

"See here," said his honor, "this boy of yours has been in this court so many times charged with chicken stealing that I'm quite tired of seeing him here."

"I doesn't blame you, jedge," said the parent, "an' I's tired of seein' him here as you is."

"Then why don't you teach him how to act? Show him the right way and he won't be coming here."

"I has showed him de right way," said the father, "but he jest don't seem to have no talent for learning how, jedge, and he always gets caught."

Her Precaution.

Husband—"I don't see, Estelle, how you could draw all your money out of the bank and spend it, when I especially told you that I wouldn't be able to give you any more for some time."

Wife—"But I did it on purpose, dear. Suppose the bank should fail?"

Playing It Safe.

"This picture," he said, stopping before one of his early efforts, "is one I painted to keep the wolf from the door."

"Indeed!" replied the visitor. "Then why don't you hang it on the knob where the wolf can see it?"

A Wise Precaution.

A 7-year-old son one night at bedtime announced that he was so tired of the kind of life he was compelled to lead that he believed there was nothing for it but for him to run away. The father considered the matter thoughtfully and then said:

"George, if that is the way you feel there is money in my purse here; you may take it all."

The boy packed his grip, got to the front door, came back on the ground of having forgotten his toothbrush and went downstairs again. The parents were much disturbed to know what he would do. He opened the front door, went out on the veranda, and all was silence. The father and mother looked at each other, but thought the course they had adopted the best, and hence did not make a move.

After fifteen minutes of intense anxiety the door opened and a boy's voice called out:

"Say, dad, if I'm going away alone I'd better take mother along, don't you think?"

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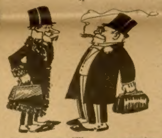

First Surgeon—"Was your operation successful on that rich broker?"

Second Surgeon—"Oh, yes; he let me in on a stock operation before he died."

Strange Interpretations.

Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, former chief of the bureau of chemistry in the department of agriculture and author of "1001 Tests of Foods, Beverages and Toilet Accessories," has interpreted many laws affecting pure food and drugs and has had some of his opinions reversed by the Department of Justice and the President.

He was discussing this one day when he said:

"The matter of interpreting laws is much like the story of the little boy who was told by his teacher to read something from a primer. The boy read as follows

"'This is a warm doughnut. Step on it.'

"'Why, Johnny,' said the teacher, 'that can't be right. Let me see your book.'

This is what she found:

"'This is a worm. Do not step on it.'"

HIS WORRYING TIME.

He had a time for everything—
Tho time was in a hurry,
And still in pleasure's rosy ring
He set a time to worry.

Called not his troubles one by one,
But bunched 'em, night an' day;
Sat up with all, from sun to sun,
And worried them away!

No Doubt There.

"You can't judge by appearance, you know."

"You can jolly well judge the presence of submarines by their appearance."

A Sharp Bargain.

Mistress McHaudem is a very keen hand at a bargain and few have ever been able to boast that they have "got the best o' her" in a deal. The other day she entered the village shop, where everything and anything, from a pair of spectacles down to an ounce of tea, can be purchased, and said: "Wad ye sell me a sugar basin withoot the cover?"

"Oh, aye," said the merchant, who would sell the shoes off his feet at a profit.

"Hoo muckle is this, then?" inquired the customer.

"That's a shullin' complete."

"An whit for the basin withoot the lid?"

"Eleven pence."

"D'ye only tak' a penny aff for the lid?"

"Weel, the lid's no' worth mair nor a penny."

"Eh, that's guid news," ejaculated the lady, with a sigh of relief. "It's jist the lid o' mine I've broken." And so saying she laid down a penny and walked off with the coveted lid before the astonished shopkeeper had time to utter a word.

Why He Was a Socialist.

Upton Sinclair, the well-known writer, told one day about a school address that he once made.

"It was a school of little boys," said Mr. Sinclair. "'The Jungle' was selling at the rate of ten thousand copies a day at the time, and, feeling flush, I opened my address by laying a five-dollar bill on the table before me.

"'I am going to talk to you boys about Socialism,' I said. 'I hope to convert you all to Socialism. When I finish my remarks the boy who gives me the best reason for turning Socialist will get this five-dollar bill.'

"Then I spoke for some twenty minutes. The boys were all converted at the end. I began to question them.

"'You are a Socialist, are you?' I said to the boy nearest me.

"'Yes, sir,' he replied.

"'And why are you a Socialist?' I asked.

"He pointed to the crisp five-dollar bill. 'Because I need the money,' he said."

Valuable Information.

"Is your boy Josh learning anything at college?"

"Yes," replied Farmer Corntossel; "he admits having learned already that there's an awful lot more things he doesn't know than he thought there was."

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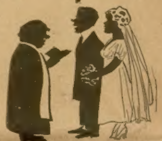


Clergyman—"I hope both of you have considered well this solemn step in your life. It's a very important step you're taking."

Mary—"Yes, I know—perhaps we'd better wait a while."

Pat—"Maybe we had, your reverence."

Clergyman—"Yes, it's solemn and important, you know, but it's a very happy time after all. I'll go on with the service."

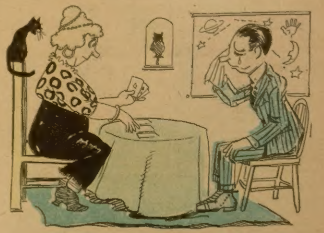
Why Most Married Men Are Poor.

"Have you ever noticed," said the nervous young man, striving to make conversation at the tea-table, "that—er—bachelors, as a rule, are—er—much richer than married men?"

"Yes," replied the masculine-looking lady, wearing the colors of the militants; "I have."

"Ah! And—er— how do you account for it?"

"Very simply. Poor men marry, and rich men don't. Men are always readier to divide nothing with a woman than something!"



Card Reader—"Here is a blond woman—she is after your money. And here, a brunette—she, too, is after your money. But why are you crying?"

Cholly—"I'm broke. Think of their disappointment."

THE SMUGGLER

Or, WE THREE GIRLS

By Ella Middleton Tybout

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CHAPTER VIII.

"WHAT I like best about Mary Anne," remarked Elizabeth, appreciatively, "is that she is so dependable."

We were standing at my window, watching Mary Anne and a market basket disappear in the direction of the village. We regarded her broad back and deliberate movements with genuine affection, knowing that her foraging would be eminently successful and our larder satisfactorily stocked, which desirable result was not by any means certain to follow when we ourselves went to market.

Gabrielle and Elizabeth had their hats on and even carried gloves, which meant that something unusual was about to happen.

"If we had not made such a definite engagement with the Campbells, I would not go one step," announced Gabrielle. "I don't like to leave you alone with a headache."

"Of course you must go," I returned ruefully. "We have set too many times and been disappointed to put it off again. Then, too, remember Lord Wilfrid is to meet you over there at luncheon, and as he must have already started, there is no way of letting him know. I will be all right when you come home, but it is too bad."

For this was the day agreed upon, after various disappointments, for a shopping expedition to the small town across the water. We intended to take advantage of the little steamer that crossed every morning and returned every afternoon, explore the place, and invest in a few articles the village could not supply. Lady Edith Campbell and her brother were to join us, and we anticipated a very jolly time.

I was therefore awfully disappointed when I wakened that morning with the dull pain in my eyeballs I have reason to respect and treat with every deference. While the girls made their toilets, protesting vigorously against leaving me alone, I rested my heavy head against the window frame and tried to calculate how long it would probably be before my brain felt clear again and life would seem worth living.

"It is the kindest thing you can do for me," I said at last. "I prefer to be alone when my head aches. When you get off I will take something and lie down, and Mary Anne will make me some tea for lunch. By the time you come home tired and rather cross, I shall be all freshly dressed and as cool and comfortable as possible. Now, if you don't start, you will miss your boat."

They finally set out, and I watched them walk down the path toward the village. Both were tall and slender, but there the resemblance ceased entirely. Gabrielle was strictly tailor-made from shoe to hat, but Elizabeth inclined toward softening the severity of such costumes by various feminine devices very telling in their effect, especially upon the masculine element of society.

When Gabrielle turned and waved her tightly-rolled silk umbrella in a farewell salute, I thought her plain, well-fitting skirt and jacket, immaculately severe linen shirtwaist, stiff cravat, and trim little hat with its knot of ribbon and long black quill, the only correct costume for any one. But when Elizabeth also turned and raised her red parasol I was not so sure, for the pretty tan-colored skirt and short Eton jacket, the dainty white blouse, and the light straw hat with a red rose under the brim, were certainly very becoming, as well as entirely suitable.

I lay quite still for some hours, then found myself gradually reviving and with a strong desire for a cup of tea. The house seemed very quiet, and tho I opened my door and called several times there was no response. I was forced to conclude that Mary Anne had taken advantage of our intended absence to spend the day in the village, not knowing I had remained at home.

I therefore got up and went down to the kitchen, to see what I could find; for I had eaten no breakfast, and felt that I would now be all the better for a little food.

The fire was out, and the prospects discouraging to one disinclined to make much of an effort; but I found some crackers, and remembered that Mary Anne had mentioned putting the milk on the hanging shelf in the cellar, so I got a glass and went after it, cracker jar in hand.

The cellar had been well aired and was much less damp and musty than on my previous visit. Also, the litter of boxes and other rubbish had been neatly piled along the wall, and the whole place seemed more habitable. The sea breeze swept thru the open windows until the hanging shelf creaked on its rusty chains, and a ray of sunlight penetrated the dark recess, almost reaching the packing case at the end.

I found the milk and filled my glass, then wandered aimlessly into the recess, sat down upon an upturned box, and began my lunch. I do not understand why I should have elected to do this, when the entire house was at my disposal, but sometimes one obeys an impulse without any tangible reason for doing so.

As I sat contentedly nibbling a cracker and sipping the milk, I heard voices, muffled but quite distinct, as tho on the other side of a thin partition. At first I was alarmed, but in an instant I recognized Mary Anne's familiar tones and was correspondingly relieved, altho her whereabouts was still a mystery.

"Now, then," said a man's voice, impatiently, "don't let's have a scene, and, for Heaven's sake, don't turn on the waterworks—this place is damp enough already."

"Oh, Willy, my dear, dear boy," she said appealingly; "don't go for to be short wi' me—don't, now!"

There was silence for a minute, and then the man spoke again.

"I tell you there's no use talking any more. I've begun the thing, and I'm going thru with it."

"But the danger, Willy, the danger!"

"I'm used to danger."

"Aye, worse luck, that you are! And me like to break me 'eart wi' thinkin' of you o' nights."

"Then don't think."

"Ah, 'ow can I 'elp it? Me that carried you in me arms when you was a little babby!"

"Well, now, will you do what I ask, or won't you?"

"Don't ask it of me, Willy—don't now."

"I do ask it."

I forgot all honorable scruples against eavesdropping, and listened with all my ears. I can only add in self-defense that I believe any one else in my place would have done the same.

He muttered something I could not hear, however, and Mary Anne gave a stifled sob.

"Oh, you didn't use to be so 'ard!" she exclaimed. "It's she 'as changed you. It's 'er fault—with 'er soft 'ands and 'er 'ard, crool 'eart!"

"Dont say anything against Nell. I won't have it."

"Oh, it's allus Nell nowadays! And what does she care what 'appens to you, so long as she's safe 'erself? If only you'd took to the fishing trade, Willy, and lived respectable 'ow 'appy we might 'ave been, and Sarah Cushley ready to marry you if you'd said the word."

"Sarah Cushley, indeed!"

"It's the books—that's what done it. Many's the time I've been sorry I ever let you go to school. Many's the time I've wished I'd listened to yer uncle when 'e wanted to take you on 'is sloop afore the mast. Fur 'e said good 'ard work, with a rope's end now and then, would make a man o' you. But you'd a look o' yer father, and you 'ad 'is fine ways——"

He interrupted her with an unpleasant laugh.

"Fine ways, indeed! That's all he ever gave his son. Don't blame me for anything, mother—look nearer home. I'm not saying it was all your fault. You thought you were married."

"God knows I did, Willy!"

"You brought me into the world, and found you were deceived, like many another fool of a girl—and serves them right, too, for thinking a gentleman would marry them."

"Oh, my boy!"

There was real tragedy in the exclamation, and I found myself wiping away a tear, but the man's voice was as cold as ever.

"So I started life under a handicap—a thorobred mongrel, made up of the worst of you and the worst of him. And I turned out a bad lot, didn't I? But whose fault was it?"

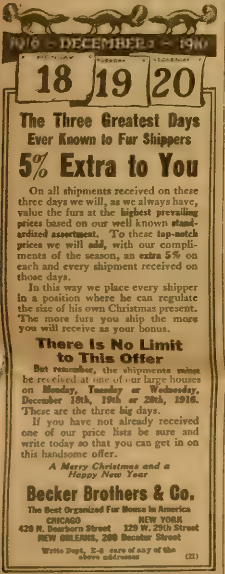
"Mine, Willy, mine."

"Yes, yours. Branded from the beginning with the bar sinister—different from other children. Don't I remember it all? Growing up with his aristocratic tastes and your environment; born with the instincts of his class, which makes luxuries necessities, and no money to

IS HE CRAZY?

The owner of a large plantation in Mississippi, where the fine figs grow, is giving away a few five-acre fruit tracts. The only condition is that figs be planted. The owner wants enough figs raised to supply a co-operative canning factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the canning factory by writing the Eubank Farms Company, 1170 Keystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for $6 per month. Your profit should be $1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness

•••


1916 — DECEMBER — 1916

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The Three Greatest Days
Ever Known to Fur Shippers

5% Extra to You

On all shipments received on these three days we will, as we always have, value the furs at the **highest prevailing prices** based on our well known **standardized assortment.** To these **top-notch prices** we will **add,** with our compliments of the season, an **extra 5%** on each and every shipment received on those days.

In this way we place every shipper in a position where he can regulate the size of his own Christmas present. The more furs you ship the more you will receive as your bonus.

There Is No Limit to This Offer

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Write Dept. E-8 care of any of the above addresses (21)

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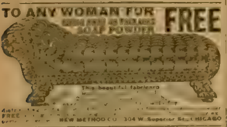
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This beautiful fabricoid [illegible]

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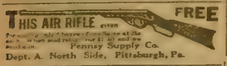
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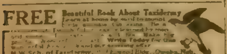
[illegible] When sold return $1.50 and we send rifle. Pennsy Supply Co.
Dept. A. North Side, Pittsburgh, Pa.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Remember this—we pay higher prices for your furs than any other house and WE CHARGE NO COMMISSION Send us a trial shipment today—let us PROVE our claims to you. Our higher prices, liberal grading and fair dealings have made us the fastest Growing Fur House in America. Send for FUR price list, Trappers' Guide, State Game Laws, Catalogue of Trappers' Supplies—ALL SENT FREE—with particulars of our great FREE GIFT to trappers.

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We are the fastest growing RAW FUR house in New York—NOW the world's greatest Fur Market. We charge no commission and grade liberally. Write for price list mailed to you free of charge.

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It Will Attract All Animals to Your Traps Send 25c in stamps for a large trial bottle. Guaranteed to increase your catch or money refunded. We will also send you FREE a large Skunk hunting picture in 6 colors, "The Unwelcome Surprise" and our latest price lists. You get full value for Furs when you ship us. *No charges for Selling as We are Direct Buyers.*

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SKUNK We pay top prices for Skunk, Mink, Muskrat, and all raw Furs. Price list free. M. J. JEWETT & SONS. REDWOOD, N. Y. DEPT. 12.

gratify them. And then the cold shoulder everywhere—contemptuous pity from his class, open ridicule from yours."

"I sent you away, Willy. I took the bit of money he gave me and sent you to the States to school, where you could be a gentleman and no questions asked. And I loved you, darlin'; I allus loved you."

"You gave me what you could, I suppose. I'm not blaming you for that. But you turned me loose with a little learning and no money—a dangerous combination, mother. So I went to the bad, preferring a short life and a merry one. Then I met Nell, and was happy, for she loved me. Don't say she didn't—she did, I tell you she does!"

"And so do I, my boy. Who could love you like your mother?"

"Then, mother, do as I tell you, without any more fuss. Come away from this place—it gets on my nerves—and give me something to drink, for I was up all night, and have more work ahead of me."

Their voices died away, and I sat for some time longer meditating upon what I had heard, and, if the truth must be told, afraid to emerge from the cellar while the man was on the premises. At last a sound in the kitchen indicated that Mary Anne had returned alone, so I went boldly up the outside steps and around to the kitchen door.

She sat on a chair near the table, her apron thrown over her head, the picture of despair, and I advanced quietly and laid my hand upon her shoulder, for my heart ached for the poor soul.

"Mary Anne," I said very gently, "I was in the cellar just now, and heard you talking."

She stared at me with widely distended eyes and trembling lips.

"Miss Elise!" she gasped. "You here?"

"I didn't go with the others, because my head ached. You have not been honest with us, Mary Anne. We didn't know you had a son."

She rested her head in her hands and burst into tears.

"Oh, Miss Elise," she sobbed, "don't look at me that way—I'm un'appy enough without that. Yes, miss, I 'ave a son, and if you 'eard us talkin', you know all about it. He took to drink, miss, and was allus in trouble. And last year 'e got to quarreling—in Montreal it was—and 'e stabbed a man. And the man up and died. So they're after 'im fur it, and they'll 'ang 'im, miss, they'll 'ang my boy if they ketches 'im."

She rocked to and fro a moment in speechless misery, and then continued:

"And I give 'im money, Miss Elise, but I don't let 'im come up 'ere, except today 'e follered me unbeknownst, miss, and I let 'im go in the coal hole. God furgive me for the liberty I took! Mostly 'e comes down the shore in 'is boat, and I meets him quite private. But I've give 'im all the money I 'ad, and my brother's give 'im money, too, and 'e's goin' back to the old country to live a decent life."

"Where were you when I heard you talking?"

"In the coal 'ole at the back o' the cellar. And I beg your parding fur the liberty I took, but don't lay it up ag'in' me, miss, fur what else could a mother do? And, Miss Elise, darlin', you'll keep a quiet tongue in yer 'ead, won't you, and let 'im git away? Fur 'e's shipped as a sailor and sails on Sunday mornin'."

I said I would talk it over with the others, but I thought if she promised never to allow him near the house again we would say nothing, as he was really going to leave the country and reform. She quite cheered up then, and insisted on getting me a lunch, waiting on me with a humility and alacrity I found most touching. This vagrant son explained various little mysteries about Mary Anne which had puzzled me a good deal, and I felt very sorry, indeed, for the poor creature with her secret trouble.

I had been so excited that I quite forgot my own ills, and longed for the return of the girls, that I might talk the matter over with them. They could not get home before six o'clock, however, so I went out on the veranda to wait for them and enjoy the salt breeze.

To my surprise, I found Lady Edith Campbell reclining in the hammock, reading the morning paper. She laughed as I exclaimed in astonishment, and came to meet me with a kiss of welcome.

"You did not expect me," she said, "and I certainly did not expect to be here, but I woke with such a wretched headache this morning I simply could not go."

"Why, so did I."

"I know—Gabrielle told me. They wanted to put it off again, but Wilfrid had already gone, and I knew he would be disappointed, so I persuaded them to go. About noon my head got better, and my room felt so close and stuffy I longed for your cool breeze and lovely view, so I managed to dress and walk up here, thinking we might compare symptoms. I rang, but no one came so I appropriated the hammock, as my walk had used me up completely. I hope you don't mind very much."

I hastened to assure her I was delighted, as I had had more than enough of my own society. So we had a long, comfortable afternoon, and by and by Mary Anne brought us tea, with an appealing glance at me which I interpreted [illegible] plea for [illegible] and I [illegible] to be [illegible] secret inviolate.

"I envy you your complexion," I remarked, as I admired the seashell tints of my guest's face. "Now, I am quite pale and heavy-eyed, but you look as fresh as a daisy, yet you have had just as hard [illegible]."

"It takes a great deal to make the Campbells lose their color," she replied, "or rather to [illegible] pale enough this morning, but as soon as the pain left me, the red returned. I am shockingly [illegible] good, sturdy [illegible] Scotch blood."

"But Lord Wilfrid often looks very pale."

"Oh, Wilfrid is an alien—we all tell him so, much to his disgust; and he is far from well, poor fellow, altho I think he is improving. Have you noticed that he seems brighter and better of late?"

I made an appropriate reply, and the conversation drifted to other things. As we sat together in the hammock, swaying gently to and fro, I happened to notice that in the lace at her throat she wore the little gold key which had excited my curiosity once before.

I spoke of it, and she at once drew it out and handed it to me, while I told her the story of the cuff button and its unusual design.

"And," I concluded, "your pin surprised me, and so did Mr. Bennett's, but please tell me why you were interested in it."

Her sweet face grew very grave, and she hesitated a moment before replying, then took the pin from me and held it in her hand.

"Elise," she said slowly, "this little pin was given me by one I loved very dearly, and whom I have lost."

"By death?"

"No, not death; there are worse things—far worse."

I thought of Mary Anne, and wondered if she would not indorse this sentiment.

"I kept the little gold key," she continued, touching it lovingly. "It was the only thing I kept, but I could not give it up. And he—but why should I burden you with my trouble? It is all past and over, and I never refer to it."

"Some day," I hazarded, "you will marry and be happy."

"I am happy now," she returned; "or, rather, I make myself believe it. But I shall not marry, for I have but one heart, and that [illegible]. I [illegible] had to [illegible] when it is convenient,' for it was a strange coincidence. As for Mr. Bennett——"

"Well?"

"I was not looking at his pin, but at his face. He is so like—so strangely like [illegible]."

I could not think of anything to say, for at critical moments my vocabulary [illegible].

"I don't know why I have told you [illegible] strangers, nor even mere acquaintances. [illegible] times. We all have graves in our hearts, we women. Yours has not come yet, and I hope it may be long deferred. Mine is still green [illegible] ful when I visit it. Forgive me, dear, you look quite sad, and, indeed, I am not worthy of so much sympathy."

"You are very brave," I said admiringly.

"I do not show the white feather to the world, that is all. But tell me about Mr. Blake, whom I met here the other day. Who and what is he?"

I could tell her very little, for Mr. Bennett had proved uncommunicative about his friend, and beyond the fact that he would be here for an indefinite period I knew nothing.

"But do tell me," I remarked, as she rose to go, "has Mrs. Bundy heard anything about her jewels?"

"Not yet. Poor old soul, she is quite heartbroken. It is generally believed a detective is in the hotel, posing as a guest, but he does not seem to be making [illegible] progress. I feel perfectly [illegible] comfortable about my few possessions, however, thanks to your goodness."

She went away then, and I sat alone in the hammock, thinking of the two secrets I had learned that afternoon, and watching the glow of the setting sun, which turned some sails pink and others pearly white, as the boatloads of merry- [illegible].

After a while Gabrielle and Elizabeth appeared, rather the worse for wear, and inclined to be indignant. They had not enjoyed themselves; the shops were no good whatever, Lady Edith had been unable to go, and there had been some

(Continued on Page 16.)

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SAVE ONE HALF
Guaranteed Watches
AT WHOLESALE PRICES
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An exquisite instrument. Made by the great Violin Maker, J. A. Baader. Pay at rate of 10c a day. 10 days free trial.
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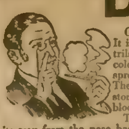
THE RUDOLPH WURLITZER COMPANY Dept. [illegible]
E. 4th St., Cincinnati, O. S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Medicated Smoke Drives Out Catarrh



Catarrh is a disease of the mucous membrane. It is characterized by a discharge through the nostrils or into the throat. It usually begins with a cold in the head. Beginning in the nostrils it spreads to all the mucous membranes of the body. The nasty discharge being swallowed, it upsets the stomach and from the stomach it is taken into the blood, and poisons and deranges the whole body. The discharge is all the time inclined to work its way from the nose back into the head—down into the throat—into the bronchial tubes and lungs. Herein is its greatest danger. Catarrh often destroys the organs of hearing and removes the sense of smell.

Try This Pleasant Herb Smoke Free
(CONTAINS NO TOBACCO)

Dr. Blosser, who has devoted 42 years to the treatment of catarrh, is the originator of a combination of medical herbs, flowers and berries to be smoked in a pipe or ready prepared cigarette. This smoke vapor reaches all the air passages of the head, nose and throat. *As shown in the accompanying illustration*, the warm healing antiseptic vapor is carried directly to the very parts affected. This Remedy fights and kills the catarrh germs where liquids, sprays, douches, salves and medicated creams cannot possibly go. It is a most reliable remedy and is so simple and convenient that it can be used at home by any man, woman or child. It is entirely harmless, containing no tobacco or habit forming drug. No matter how severe or long standing your case may be he wants to show you what the Remedy will do for you.

DR. BLOSSER'S REMEDY
REACHES HERE
AND HERE
AND HERE
AND HERE
AND HERE

Free Sample Package by Mail
(FIVE DAYS' SUPPLY)

Write a post card or cut out and fill in the free sample coupon, mail it to Dr. Blosser and he will send you by mail a liberal trial package entirely free. This free package contains some of the Remedy for smoking in a pipe (new pipe included) and some of the medicated cigarettes. He will also send you an illustrated booklet explaining about catarrh and giving letters from customers who have used this Remedy. When you try the free sample you will see how the warm pleasant medicated vapor goes to every spot and gives such immediate relief.

If you suffer from catarrh, asthma, bronchial irritation, catarrhal deafness, or are subject to frequent colds, you cannot afford to neglect the use of this Remedy. The regular package contains 100 cigarettes or a 30 days' supply for the pipe, sent by mail postpaid for $1. Send for the Free Sample Supply or a regular package today.

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Dear Doctor:—Please send me by mail, free of all charges, a trial supply of your Catarrh Remedy and your illustrated booklet.
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(Spell out name with pencil, very, very plainly.)

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EVERY HOME ON FARM, IN SMALL TOWN or suburb needs and will buy the wonderful Aladdin kerosene (coal-oil) mantle lamp; five times as bright as electric, tested and recommended by Government and 34 leading universities; awarded gold medal; one farmer cleared over $500 in 6 weeks; hundreds with rigs or autos earning $100 to $300 per month; no capital required; we furnish goods on time to reliable men; write quick for distributor's proposition, and lamp for free trial. Mantle Lamp Co., 607 Aladdin Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

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AGENTS! UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY to make good money selling wonderful Angle Lamps. Bought as soon as seen. Brilliant light below lamp where needed. 16 hours one quart oil. No shadow—smoke—odor. Crackerjack to demonstrate. Send for proposition to Dept. B, Angle Mfg Co., 244 W. 23rd St., New York City.

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$20 TO $35 PER MONTH TO ANY EMployed person without interfering with regular work. No selling, no canvassing. Positively no investment. Unemployed need not apply. Address Mutual Mdse. Co., Dept. 101, Dayton, Ohio.

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A SURE JOB FOR YOU WITH BIG PAY and steady work. Thousands of government positions open this year. Write for big Free Book D. V. 1034 which tells how to get one.—Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

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NO STRIKE: 8 HOUR DAY. MEN EVERYwhere. Firemen, Brakemen, Baggagemen, $120. Colored Porters. Experience unnecessary. 686 Railway Bureau, E. St. Louis, Ill.

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WRITE RIGHT! SHORT STORY WRITING easily taught. Sample lesson and particulars, 10c. Short Story Survey, 667 East 164th St., New York.

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WILL PAY RELIABLE WOMAN $25.00 TO distribute Free (not to sell) 200 pkgs. Borax Soap Powder among friends. No money required. B. W. Ward Company, 732 N. Franklin St., Chicago.

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INVESTORS MAGAZINE FREE TO YOU. $10 invested with us has made others $300 in few months. Our magazine, "Hoffman's Investment Journal," tells how this was done. This magazine gives facts about the real earning power of money. Tells how many have started on the road to fortune. To introduce it we will send three months free. If you want to make money, write today saying, "Send your magazine." Hoffman Trust Company, 339 Kress Building, Houston, Texas.

$10 INVESTED—PROFITS $300 FROM OIL actually made for small investors in Coastal fields where gusher wells pay thousands daily; we have valuable leases; want to drill 10 wells. Drilling operations have started. Exceptional opportunity. Limited number of shares $12.50, payments if desired. Write for maps and co-operative plan. Houston Oil Fields Association, 1126 Carter Bldg., Houston, Texas.

FREE TO EVERY BUYER OF LOTS IN MY Addition near Houston, Texas, an interest in a cash investment of $15,000.00 that may make you rich. You must write promptly for details or you may be too late. M. F. Hinckley, 346 Beatty Building, Houston, Texas.

$20 BUYS DEED TO LAND, ALSO INTEREST in oil wells that should pay you $100 for every dollar invested; payments $1 monthly; complete information free. Address Texas-Gulf Co., 1105 Union Bank, Houston, Texas

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OKLAHOMAN PETROLEUM COMPANY—Building a big oil producing enterprise—offers shares at attractive price. Lawyers Trust Company, Fiscal Agent, Oklahoma City.

$10 NOW MAY BRING YOU $1,000. NEW plan. Square deal to all. Write for particulars. Square Deal Oil & Gas Co., Ardmore, Okla.

FARM LANDS

PROSPERITY IN CANADA—THOUSANDS of farmers in Western Canada have sold their crops this year for more than the total cost of their land. Land at $15 to $30 an acre has produced crops worth $40 to $75 an acre. Stock raising and dairying are equally profitable—hogs and beef highest in country's history. Irrigation districts producing more alfalfa and fodder crops than ever before. Get your farm home from the Canadian Pacific Railway. Last year I asked you to take advantage of this opportunity—you might have paid for your farm with the 1916 crop—again I extend the invitation. Good land from $11 to $30 per acre; irrigated land from $35; 20 years to pay; government guarantees land and water titles. Pay in full at any time if desired. We will lend you up to $2,000 in improvements in certain districts, with no security other than the land. Ready-made farms sold on special easy terms. Loan for live stock after one year's occupation, subject to certain reasonable conditions explained on request. Low taxes; no taxes on improvements. Free schools; full religious liberty, good climate, and the best neighbors in the world. Other farmers becoming rich in Western Canada; you have the same opportunity. Buy direct from the Canadian Pacific Railway. Write for free book and full information. J. S. Dennis, Assistant to the President Canadian Pacific Railway, 94 Ninth Avenue, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

ANNOUNCEMENT—WE ARE CLOSING OUT our Farm Lands located in the Famous Mississippi Delta or Valley, between Memphis and Vicksburg in Mississippi—the richest and most productive agricultural locality in the South. Write for our list containing forty-one separate tracts, with plat, description and agricultural conditions, which includes highly improved grain, hay and cattle farms, producing an income and a steady increase in land value; also all-year cattle range land. Exchange for other property will not be considered, but we will make terms if required. Here is an opportunity to get a highly improved rich farm at about half the actual cost. A perfectly safe investment in a well-settled healthy locality. We are manufacturers of lumber on a large scale and find it desirable to liquidate our farm holdings. Prompt action important. Address Geo. T. Houston & Co., 211 Railway Exchange Bldg., Chicago, Ill

FARMS WANTED

FARMS WANTED— HAVE 7,000 BUYERS; describe your unsold property. 504 Farmers Exchange, Denver, Colo.

MONTANA FARM LANDS

FREE—320 ACRE MONTANA HOMEsteads. Circular free. Information Bureau 5, Boulder, Mont.

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$5.00 TO YOU FOR CHRISTMAS. THIS AD, and $2.00 in currency, will be credited as a $7.00 payment on one of our fine 50x100 feet lots at Satsuma, suburban to the great growing city of Houston, Texas. Seventeen railroads and deep water. Buy a lot for Mother and the kids. Price only $25.00 to $40.00 each; terms $2.00 monthly. We will select you fine lot. Christmas nearly here. Write quick. C. W. Hahl Company, Owners, 640 Paul Bldg., Houston, Texas.

A SMALL FARM IN CALIFORNIA WILL make you more money with less work. You will live longer and better. Delightful climate. Rich soil. Hospitable neighbors. Good roads, schools and churches. Write for our San Joaquin Valley illustrated folders free. C. L. Seagraves, Industrial Commissioner, AT&SF Ry., 1931 Ry. Exch., Chicago.

OIL LAND INVESTMENTS

FORTUNES ARE BEING MADE IN THE Oil Fields. Oil Land sold on easy payments. You can start with $1.00. Particulars Free. Write today. Address, Frank P. Cleveland, 1124 Adams Express Building, Chicago

FARM LANDS FOR SALE

VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA FARMS $15. Per Acre and up. Easy payments. Fruit, Dairy, Stock, Climate, Schools, Churches, Roads, Markets & Neighbors of the best. Get our Farm Lists, magazine and other interesting literature, all free. Address F. H. LaBaume, Agrl. Agt., N. & W. Ry., 248 N. & W. Bldg., Roanoke, Va.

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SMALL MISSOURI FARM. $10 CASH AND $5 monthly; no interest or taxes; highly productive land; close to 3 big markets; write for photographs and full information. Munger, C-107, N. Y. Life Bldg., Kansas City, Mo

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WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG OF BEST books on writing and selling photoplays, short stories, poems. Atlas Publishing Co., 844, Cincinnati.

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THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AVIATION announces a new correspondence course in Aero-Construction and Design. A thorough training in aeronautical engineering. American School of Aviation, 5019, 431 So. Dearborn St., Chicago.

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WHY BE LONESOME? FIND YOUR AFfinity and be happy. Let me help you with a sane modern method. No publicity. Strictly confidential. All first class mail. Quick results assured. Either sex. Send full description and thirty cents for large list of names and addresses. Address W. E. Hammond, 122 West First St., Marion, Ind

SUFFERERS FROM NERVOUS, WEAK, run down conditions should take Juven Pills. They accomplish marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1, by C. I. Hood Co., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, Lowell, Mass. (Z.R.)

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FREE COUPON WITH 88-PIECE CHRISTmas Packages—Cards, tags, seals, stickers. 10c. 3 for 25c. Premium Package Co., 30 Henry St., Battle Creek, Mich.

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MARRY—FREE PHOTOS, BEAUTIFUL ladies; descriptions and directory; pay when married. New Plan Co., Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY WITH photos and description free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept 28, Kansas City, Mo

GET MARRIED—BEST MATRIMONIAL paper published. Mailed Free. The Correspondent, Toledo, Ohio.

GET MARRIED; LARGE, HANDSOMELY illustrated matrimonial magazine mailed free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

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MARRY RICH HUNDREDS ANXIOUS TO marry. Descriptions and photos free. E. Unity, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

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By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to the Chicago Ledger. The address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

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GENTLE JABS

Time is a worker that accomplishes much.

It's useless to advertise for lost opportunities.

Only a man who is wise doubts his own wisdom

You can't push ahead by patting yourself on the back

Troubles are like babies; they grow larger by nursing

Some men either have to be on the water wagon or on the tank.

The man who tries to lengthen his nights is apt to shorten his days.

When a man gets short of money lots of his so-called friends get short of sympathy

The good Samaritan didn't wait to be introduced to the man who had fallen among thieves.

Knowledge is power—and if a man empties his purse into his head no man can take it away from him

CLASSIFIED WANT ADS

PHOTOPLAYS, STORIES, ETC.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS FOR PHOTOPLAYS, Stories, etc. We accept them in any form—correct Free—sell on commission. Big rewards! Make money. Get details now. Writer's Selling Service, 10 Main, Auburn, N. Y.

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$2 TO $500 EACH PAID FOR HUNDREDS of Coins. Keep all money dated before 1895 and send ten cents for new illustrated Coin Value Book, size 4x7. It may mean your fortune. Get posted. Clarke Coin Company, Box 70, Le Roy, N. Y.

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POULTRY PAPER, 44-124 PAGE PERIODICAL, up to date, tells all you want to know about care and management of poultry, for pleasure or profit; four months for 10 cents. Poultry Advocate, Dept. 128, Syracuse, N. Y.

PATENTS

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Actual search and patentability report free. Send sketches and description, or model, of your invention. My patent sales service gets full value. 1916 Edition ninety-page patent [illegible] 260 Barrister [illegible], Washington, D. C.

WANTED, AN IDEA! WHO CAN THINK of some simple thing to patent? Protect your ideas, they may bring you wealth. Write for "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 174, Washington, D. C.

"PATENTS AND PATENT POSSIBILITIES" is a 72-page treatise telling what to invent and where to sell it. Manufacturers constantly writing for patents. Help supply the demand. Books free. H. S. Hill, 933 McLachlen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

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Home and Health

FASHION NOTES.

Very many of the new hats and toques are bordered with narrow bands of ermine, skunk or "lapin"; indeed, bands of fur are to be seen everywhere and on everything

If you desire a handsome afternoon gown there is nothing so satisfactory as velvet. It looks its value. This may be a commercial method of viewing clothes, but it is gratifying to have a costume show the money that has been expended upon it.

The Parisiennes are so devoted to tailored suits, in black or navy blue serge, that it is difficult to believe that they will really allow their favorite street costume to be given a second place, but certain it is that at the moment separate coats and wraps are considered the only possible.

Fur collar novelties are being prepared for wear during the colder weather. The straight high band, called the cage, is a favorite with a small round muff to match. The band is so [illegible] that the [illegible] left quite unprotected, tho it also comes in a limp edition with a center fold, clasping the throat comfortably. Another pretty trifle is the pelerine, with short stole ends in the front, one of which is brought across and fastened upon the other.

*

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

A pretty card table cover is made of heavy white linen, with a spread pack of cards in each corner, embroidered in black and red.

Boudoir caps are good gifts for young girls. A new embroidered sort is made in the style of a Dutch cap, with the embroidery in delft blue or in black, on a sheer white muslin ground

For the women who travel a corset bag, a long, narrow washable bag, embroidered with the word "Corsets," is useful. These bags can also be used to hold corsets in the bureau drawers or closet shelves.

For the young housekeeper a [illegible] gift is a luncheon set, all in one [illegible] consisting of centerpiece and four [illegible] doilies attached, in the form of a [illegible] cross. This is embroidered [illegible] designs and in either [illegible]

[illegible] the realm of [illegible] needlework [illegible] the new [illegible] s, which [illegible] make [illegible] ts for the boy or girl away at college, are of heavy tan linen or crash, embroidered in conventional designs in bright colors, and finished with wide tan cotton fr[illegible]

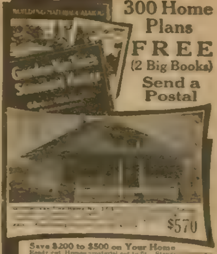
The shops are full [illegible] to embroider and [illegible] shoe bag, which would [illegible] ing gift for a baby's [illegible] Christmas when the b[illegible] old enough to appreciate toys [illegible] that appeals to its mother is always acceptable. This bag is to [illegible] a door or wall. It is made of [illegible] white material and there are [illegible] tions, one [illegible] baby's shoes

*

RECIPES.

LEMON TARTS—Cream together a cupful of butter [illegible] stir in the beaten yol[illegible] grated rind of one a[illegible] lemons, a dash of n[illegible] of brandy and the [illegible] the eggs. Line pa[illegible] paste and fill with the [illegible] Serve cold

CASSEROLE OYSTER PIE—Brown minced onion in two tablespoons of flour; stir till blended, then add half [illegible] water; cook until thickened, add one pint of oysters with their liquor and season with paprika, salt and one teaspoon of kitchen bouque[illegible] once from the fire; line [illegible] casseroles with plain pastry and bake; cool slightly; fill with oyster filling and cover with a lattice cover of the paste; brown in a quick oven and serve hot.



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To introduce our wholesale catalog of [illegible] watches, we will send you at your [illegible]

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Written Guarantee for [illegible] years [illegible] After [illegible] if you are not satisfied, return watch and we will refund your money. Order now. Mention kind wanted.
M. BYRNE & CO., C-1, 115 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Money Back If Not Relieved
Have you croup among your children; catarrh, colds, coughs, [illegible] on chest, sprains, bruises, cut, wounds, piles, burns, chilblains, head aches, rheumatism, neuralgia, sore or tired feet, sore arms, pain or inflammation anywhere? Postpaid 25c.
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$3 Hat Free

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WE want the opportunity to mould this elegant Blue Serge Suit to your own form and your own measurements and send it to you subject to your own inspection and approval! When it comes we want you to try it on, show it to your friends and in every way compare it with any $20.00 suit you've ever owned or ever saw and if not superior in every way, send it back at our expense.

This is mighty strong talk but we have the goods. We know. You don't know and that is the reason we are anxious for the opportunity to convince you of the entire truth of our statements. The IMPORT has thousands of enthusiastic customers among the best dressers throughout the country—they've been with us for years—fat men, slim men, young men, old men, all shapes and sizes and the more peculiar and the more particular, the better it suits The IMPORT.

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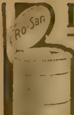

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More Comfortable, Healthful and Convenient. Eliminates the outdoor privy, open vault and cesspool. They are breeding places for germs. Have a warm, sanitary, odorless, toilet right in your house. No going out in cold weather. A boon to invalids. Endorsed by State Boards of Health. W. M. Davis writes: "Your [illegible] a home without sewerage."

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DO YOU WANT FLESH
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Cut this coupon and enclose with your letter 10 cents in stamps or silver to help pay cost of postage and packing, and receive free without further [illegible] VIRATOLE.
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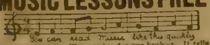

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No more gall stones, Pains or Aches in Stomach, [illegible] Liver Trouble, Stomach Misery, Dyspepsia, Colic, Gas, Biliousness, Headaches, Constipation, Piles, Catarrh, Nervousness, Blues, Jaundice, Appendicitis. These are common Gallstone symptoms can be Cured. Send for home treatment. MEDICAL BOOK on LIVER, STOMACH, GALL TROUBLES & APPENDICITIS. FREE
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The Smuggler

(Continued From Page 1[illegible])

misunderstanding, for Lord Wilfrid had not met them at the time appointed.

Altogether, the day had been a failure, and it was not until a good dinner had calmed their aggrieved spirits that I began to relate my own experiences, giving the history of Mary Anne with as much pathos as I could manage.

"Of course," remarked Elizabeth, "we ought to discharge her. It is not pleasant to think of a murderer being concealed in the house."

Good gracious!" exclaimed Gabrielle, in an alarmed voice. "What are you talking about? Think of her waffles."

"Oh, I was not going to do it; I only said that we ought to. She is too valuable to lose, especially if he really is going away."

So we told Mary Anne that it was all right, and we would allow her son to escape as he had planned. She was pathetically grateful, and promised never to allow him on the premises again, so we felt quite comfortable about him; and, after all, why should we interfere with a fellow creature in his effort to preserve life, since the life he took could not be restored by his capture?

But my last thought that night was of Lady Edith and the look in her brown eyes as she held the little key.

CHAPTER X.

"My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly blown in June;
My love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune"

It was a baritone voice, so clear, so strong, and yet so sweet that involuntarily we stopped talking and listened until the end of the verse.

"Where is it?" I questioned.

"I think," said Gordon Bennett, "it must come from a boat; it will round the point presently."

We were walking along the beach, and had wandered farther than we intended, almost to the point of the island, in fact, and, quite tired out, I had seated myself upon a rock to rest a while before going back.

"I wish he would sing again," I remarked; "don't you?"

"Well, no," returned my companion; "to be frank, I would rather have your undivided attention."

"Why, please?"

"I suppose it is because I was born with a selfish disposition."

"Listen!" I exclaimed, as the song began again, closer this time, with every word distinct and clear.

"So fair is she, my dearest dear,
So much in love am I,
That I would love her all my life
Till all the seas run dry;
Till all the seas run dry, my dear,
And rocks melt wi' the sun"

The boat was quite near now, and the song ceased abruptly as the singer stood erect and waved his hat cheerfully; a white parasol in the stern also beckoned invitingly.

"Why," I said, "they are waving at us."

"It is Graham," said Gordon Bennett briefly, "and your friend Lady Edith."

"So it is." I was genuinely pleased, for I could see they wanted us to join them, and I was more than willing to avoid the walk home.

"Get aboard," called Mr. Graham, as the bow grated against a rock. "You can do it, if you don't mind stepping from one rock to the other."

"We can do it easily," I replied, "if Mr. Bennett will give me his hand to steady me."

"Would you not rather walk home?"

Mr. Bennett's voice was certainly not encouraging, but I ignored it, for I wanted the sail.

"Come, Mr. Bennett," called Lady Edith; "we have plenty of room. I have been spending the morning with Mrs. Graham, and we went out for a sail just after lunch, but she could not be persuaded to join us."

"Oh!" I said, as I took Mr. Graham's outstretched hand and stepped into the boat, which wobbled unpleasantly. "It is awfully nice—after you get in."

"It is a bully day for a sail," he returned, his face glowing with the pleasure it had given him. "I only wish you would talk a bit to Mrs. Graham and get her to come out just once. She has no idea how fine it is.

"My wife," he explained to Mr. Bennett, who had followed me into the boat, "has an unaccountable aversion to the water; and she will not trust herself on it, even with me."

"[illegible]," remarked Mr. Bennett. "[illegible] She must condemn herself to a good many hours alone, for I notice you [illegible] out constantly."

"Oh, yes; we agreed that I was to go whenever I chose. She does not wish to keep me at home, and we quite understand each other on the subject."

"You were singing," I said, as the sail filled and the boat cut thru the water; "won't you please go on? I had no idea you had such a lovely voice.

"Yes," said Lady Edith; "do sing again, Mr. Graham. It was quite lovely, and you must not be selfish with such a talent."

So Mr. Graham sang again, and we listened entranced, for his voice was very melodious, and he sang as the birds do, with no apparent effort or consciousness of his charm. Lady Edith in the stern kept her face in the shadow of her parasol and said but little, yet I saw her eyes grow misty, and remembered our conversation about the little gold key. Was she thinking of the man she loved? I wondered dreamily.

"I'll land you at your own dock," he remarked, as he steered for the shore. "And I'm sure I am very grateful for the nice things you say about the songs. I sing because I like to sing—just as I yield to every impulse whenever I can get any pleasure out of it. It seems the simplest thing to do."

It was rather a dangerous theory, I thought, altho as I looked at Mr. Graham's ruddy face and heard his careless laugh I quite understood that he would generally live up to what he said. And I had a quick recollection, too, of the package Elizabeth had opened; was that caused by a sudden impulse, I wondered, and had he extracted his full measure of satisfaction out of it?

Lord Wilfrid was waiting on the dock when we landed, his cap pulled down over his eyes and his manner the reverse of cordial.

"I have looked everywhere for you, Edith," he said. "You did not tell me you expected to go sailing. Did you make up your party this morning?"

He looked at Gordon Bennett as he spoke, and paused for a reply.

"It was quite unpremeditated," said that gentleman. "In fact, your sister and Mr. Graham were kind enough to pick us up a good bit down the beach and give us a lift home."

"Was any one else with you?"

"I took a short sail with Mr Graham, Wilfrid," said Lady Edith. "I am sorry if you have needed me, but I thought you intended fishing this afternoon."

She looked steadily at him, and he lowered his eyes instinctively. But his face, as he watched Mr. Graham push off and sail away, was heavy and lowering, and his fingers twitched nervously.

"Listen," I said. "Mr. Graham is singing again."

He was standing by his sail now, the light of the sun full upon him, apparently unconscious of the picture he made.

"And I will love you still, my dear,
When all the seas run dry——"

The words of the old song died away, and I turned to my companions.

"Let us go home," I said; but Lady Edith and her brother had already gone.

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A farmer went into a city restaurant. His appetite ran to cheese, and inquiring of the waiter what sort of cheese was listed, remarked that he desired "something new."

"Why don't you try a bit of Roquefort?" suggested the waiter.

"What's that?" asked the farmer. "Hang it!" he added. "Bring me some. I like the name anyway."

He ate of it and liked it, so he thought he would take some home to his wife. Arriving late, he laid the small cheese, wrapped in silver paper, on the sideboard.

He forgot to inquire about it till next night, and then he asked his wife how she liked it.

"Oh, I s'pose it's mighty stylish up to the city, but I jes' kinder couldn't use it. I couldn't get no foam out of it and when I washed the children they smelled kinder funny, and I couldn't say's I like it."

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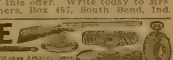

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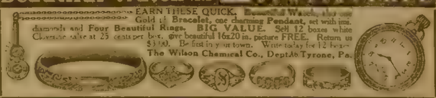

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CHAPTER VII.

A NEW JOB.

IT WAS a close call, Ned," said Billy.

"Too close for comfort," responded Ned Castleman, who had just acquainted his friend Billy O'Neil with his adventures in the burning house. "I took great risks when I leaped from the window thru the fire, but fortunately I came out pretty well—just a little scorched, nothing more. While I did not get to see the features of the man who bound and gagged me and then turned on the gas to finish me, I am sure I could name him. I cannot say that he fired the building, but I wouldn't put such a deed past that human tiger. The villains are now settled in the Monadnock Building, where they are carrying on their game of swindling hundreds thru the Great Alaska Diamond Company. The plot to rob old Hector Iliff of his million and blight the life of Miss Doris is another chapter in their game."

"I hope they will not succeed," said Billy.

"They will fail!" was the reply. "The Countess is watching them, and Old Condor is not far off. I am going to see the woman now, for I want to hear what she knows of Barrow & Batch."

"Good luck to you, Ned, but don't let Boris Barrow hit your trail again."

"Not if I can help it!" exclaimed Ned. "I have been twice trapped by that fiend, who with his partner fears me, and I intend to keep out of their nets hereafter."

Ned picked up his hat and was soon on the street. As the Countess had given him her address, he knew where to find the house, and in a short time he was in the vicinity of it.

When he had been admitted he asked for the room occupied by "Lola Monta," for that was the name on the card he carried, and he was told to go upstairs and knock at the first door to the right.

There was no response to his knock, and he gently turned the knob and entered a small but neatly furnished room which had no occupant.

The Countess was not at home.

"I'll wait," said Ned to himself. "She may come in soon," and he took a chair.

Already the lights in the streets were being turned on, and the room became more observable. Once or twice Ned heard footsteps on the stair, but the Countess did not present herself. He found his patience waning.

At length a sound approached the door which he had been watching ever since he entered the room. He saw the knob turn and then the door was pushed open. The face that he saw nearly drove him to his feet.

It was not the face of the woman he expected, but the hated one of no less a person than Basil Batch. The little man, who had not yet caught sight of Ned, came in stealthily like a panther. Surely he had not come to the Countess' house for any good.

Ned, still watching the man, fell back into the depths of the chair and held his breath. Mr. Batch still had not noticed him, owing to the semi-darkness of the room.

"Not in yet?" Ned heard him say. "She can't remain out much longer, so I'll just wait."

Basil walked over to the window and looked out.

"She won't rob us any more," he went on, talking to himself. "She came down upon us like the Assyrians and coolly took that ten thousand. I never saw the like of it."

Ned wondered what had happened. Had some one robbed the robbers?

"Might as well take a chair," Basil went on, turning from the window. "It's just as cheap as standing," and he laughed a little at his own observation.

As he came toward the watchful boy he suddenly stopped and let out a cry. For the first time he saw that he was not the sole tenant of the Countess' chamber.

"Who are you?" he gasped, leaning forward and fixing his devilish eyes on Ned. "I didn't know you were here."

"Me? I'm liable to turn up anywhere," said Ned, amused at Basil's genuine fright. "Don't you remember me, Mr. Batch?"

"Oh, the boy!" cried Basil. "I thought that——"

"That I perished in the fire, eh? Isn't that so? Have you called to see the Countess?"

Mr. Batch did not know what to say. His astonishment at finding Ned in the house was not abating any. But all at once his little eyes snapped fire.

"Sit still!" he cried in commanding tones, as he came nearer, lifting his terrifying hands.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the boy, getting upon his feet. "I won't be mesmerized by such a brute as you. I know what you did in Hector Iliff's house, and you're not going to put the same racket over on me."

As he spoke Ned drew back so as to get out of line of the dangerous eyes which he knew were full of power. If he yielded he was lost.

"Stand still!" almost shouted Basil Batch. "You're an easy bird when my system works. Now you're going to sleep——"

"You lie!" cried Ned, with a mighty effort shaking off the tightening coils. "I will not be dazed by you."

He seized a chair and raised it above his head, but the man did not move. The eyes were at work and his hands were making strange passes before Ned's face.

"He shall not trance me," went thru Ned's brain with the rapidity of lightning. "He is as dangerous as Boris Barrow. Heaven help me to baffle this wolf!"

He went at Basil with the uplifted chair, and the man recoiled with a fiendish growl, which sounded like the noise of a wild beast.

"Get out!" cried Ned, driving him toward the door. "You need not wait for the Countess. I will tell her all when she comes."

Basil, with one more attempt to stop his intended victim with his dangerous skill, reached the door and looked back with a grated curse. Ned followed up his victory and drove him down the stair. At one time he thought of hurling the chair at his head, but he desisted.

Out of the house went the baffled rascal, and Ned, with a smile of triumph on his face, went back to the Countess' room and sank into the chair again.

"That's one time they didn't get me," he said, with a satisfied chuckle. "Basil will report to Boris, and the two will put their heads together to get rid of me somehow."

Presently the door opened, and to his delight Ned saw the Countess come in.

"The very person I want to see!" she exclaimed, at sight of Ned, who rose from his seat to greet her. "How long have you waited for me?"

"I was here when Basil Batch came, and——"

"What!" interrupted the Countess. "Was that little demon with the dangerous eyes here?"

"He hasn't been gone very long."

"I'm really sorry I missed him," said the woman. "But never mind; we are liable to meet some other time. I've got a situation for you."

Ned wondered.

"You are to enter the service of Hector Iliff, or rather you are to help Miss Doris take care of him."

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yes. That is right where you are needed, for I have just seen the girl, and she has told me of your visit and what you saw the night Basil Batch came and got the old man's money. You will enter upon your duties tomorrow."

"Tonight if you wish."

"No, you can have the night to yourself. You are to report to me the doings in the old millionaire's house. The two villains are playing a high game for big stakes, and we must bring them to book. They're dangerous, boy!"

"I know that, for I have already felt their claws," responded Ned.

"And so have many others," said the

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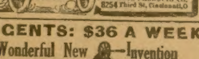

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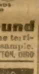

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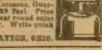

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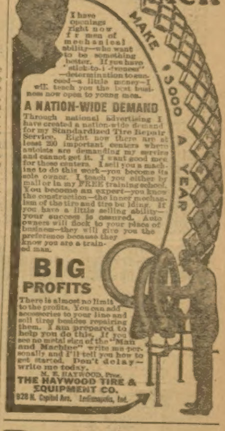

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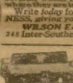

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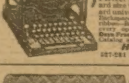

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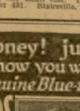

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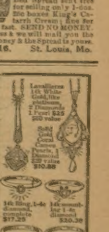

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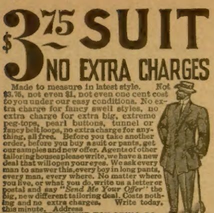

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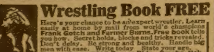

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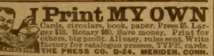

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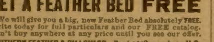

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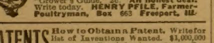

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Countess. "They will not stop at murder."

"I am well aware of that. I'll do my best to serve you, for I know whatever I do in the line of duty will be for justice and right."

An hour later Ned stood in the shadow of a building, watching a man who in turn was keeping tab on another. The man he saw was Old Condor.

For some time the one-eyed enemy of Barrow and Batch remained like a wolf in ambush; then, suddenly, as a taxicab drew up to the curb at the hall of the person whom he was watching, he darted forward.

As the vehicle moved off, Old Condor leaped after it for the purpose of catching on behind, when suddenly a sharp report rang out, and the one-eyed man swayed backward and fell into the street.

Thrilled by what he had seen, Ned sprang to the man's side and bent over the fallen man. He was surrounded by a curious crowd in an instant.

"He's past help," said a policeman who had come up. "The man is dead!"

Ned uttered a cry. It was true as the officer had said. A bullet from the man in the taxicab had finished the career of Old Condor, and he would trail the two wolves no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

NED ON GUARD.

TRUE to his promise to the Countess, Ned reported for duty at the home of Hector Iliff, the millionaire, and was welcomed by Doris. The girl told him that the Countess had made the proper arrangements, and that his main work would be to read to Mr. Iliff, who was incapable of holding a book in his hands.

There was one thing still very fresh in Ned's mind, and that was the tragic death of Old Condor, which he had witnessed. While he had had but a glimpse of the man who had hailed the taxicab from which the fatal shot was fired, he was sure he could identify him, and he resolved to be ready for that purpose whenever called upon.

"Basil Batch was here yesterday," said Doris to Ned. "I made it my business to remain with Uncle Hector during his stay, and therefore nothing exciting took place. He is liable to drop in any night, and you will undoubtedly come face to face with him. Keep your head, whatever happens, for Basil Batch is dangerous, and will stoop to anything to carry out the plans he and his partner have formed."

"I will try to do my part," assured the boy. "I am sure Mr. Batch hasn't forgotten our meeting in the Countess' room."

Hector Iliff was a man whose sands of life had almost run out. Enfeebled by toil and age, he was a ripe victim for the arts of the scheming villain, and Doris was glad to have Ned in the house to aid her in defeating the great plot.

The day passed without incident, and Ned was reading to Mr. Iliff in the library when the doorbell jingled. He heard Doris' footsteps in the hall, and turned to the door. Voices soon reached his ears, and then some one was ushered into the library.

A smile gathered at Ned's lips when he looked into the startled face of Basil Batch. The little man was dressed in the latest mode, and as he came forward his eyes seemed to bulge from his head.

Hector Iliff greeted the wolf with a wan look.

"You see I am not alone," he said, waving his hand toward Ned. "I wanted some one to entertain me with a book now and then, and Doris found this boy somewhere and——"

"It's a good idea," interrupted Batch, tho from his look he wished that seas intervened between him and Ned.

The little man dropped into a chair, but could not take his eyes off of Ned.

"I have just dropped in to bid the time of night," said he, suddenly. "You know, as a friend, I take a great interest in your health, Mr. Iliff."

"For which I thank you very much," was the reply. "What, you are not going already?"

"Yes. I have an engagement."

But still the man did not leave his chair. His eyes had suddenly got a strange look, and were fixed on Ned, who felt a thrill flit thru every fiber of his body. The man was again practicing his infamous art.

Equal to the emergency, Ned took up a book and let his gaze drop to the printed pages. He was determined to baffle the rascal.

"Well, I must go," said Basil, giving up the attempt to mesmerize Ned. "I will drop in again."

"Please do," answered Hector Iliff. "The boy is good company and has a clear voice."

Ned's gaze followed the little man to the door and saw him vanish in the hall.

"A nice man," remarked Mr. Iliff.

"Yes," replied Ned, beating down a desire to tell all he knew about the visitor. "There are many like him in the world," and there was a deep, hidden meaning in his words.

Ten minutes later he stood face to face with the girl Doris.

"It was well done!" she exclaimed. "I was secretly watching all the time. The man was trying to bring you under his subtle influence, but you nobly thwarted him."

"It took all my power to resist," said Ned. "Now, if I could follow him, he would undoubtedly lead me to his partner in crime, Boris Barrow."

"I have no doubt of that."

"Mr. Iliff is asleep in his chair and will need me no more tonight."

"It is his bedtime hour and I will take charge of him," said Doris, and Ned slipped out of the house into the street.

He had again outwitted Basil Batch, and that was victory enough for one night.

Darting away, he soon turned up in another part of the city and opened the door of a small room in which sat a man who smiled as he came forward.

"You know what happened last night on M—— street?" began Ned, as he took a vacant chair.

"The shooting of the unknown man from a taxicab? Yes, I know of that, and that is about all I do know."

Gordon Tracey, the detective, who had known Ned for some time, became interested.

"What do you know about it?" he asked, for he saw a certain light spring up in the boy's eyes.

"I saw the shooting."

"You?" exclaimed the detective. "You are always seeing something in the city."

"Yes, I saw the tragedy," pursued Ned. "The man who seems to be unknown to the police is known as Old Condor. Of his past I know nothing, but I think I know why he was shot down."

"Well, that is something," smiled Tracey. "He was really shot from the taxi?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because he was on the trail of the man who shot him."

"Better and better!" was the exclamation. "We'll have you with us one of these days, Ned."

"It was by the merest accident that I saw the murder," Ned went on. "I had but a glimpse of the man who hailed the taxi, but he is one of two men who wanted to get rid of Old Condor."

"I see. And his name?"

"I am not positive, but were I to say who I think the man with the gun was I would name Boris Barrow."

"Yes. But we would need more proof than your belief."

"I understand that. The taxi's number was 1669. I saw that plainly."

"Then we will see what the taxi man has to say," observed the detective. "When you speak of Boris Barrow do you mean the member of the fleecing firm that does business on Broadway?"

"They have left that nest," answered Ned, "and are now in the Monadnock building."

"At their old tricks, of course," and Tracey smiled. "They will never quit till they are at the end of their tether.'

"That's where I'm trying to land them," smiled the boy. "And if I have good luck there's where they'll end."

When Ned left his friend, the detective, he resolved to hunt up Billy and tell him of his new employment. He had much to talk about.

As he turned a street corner he nearly collided with a man who was gazing up at a tall building with a curiosity that excited his interest. Taking sudden notice of Ned, the man turned upon him and asked:

"Is this the Waterloo building?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Many thanks. I suppose you live in the city?"

"I was born here."

"And know a good many people, I suppose?"

Ned smiled at the question.

"I can't say that I know everybody," said he, "but I do know quite a few."

"Well, I live over in Jersey, and am looking for a business firm called Barrow & Batch."

Ned started.

"Have you dealings with them?" he queried.

"Well, yes. You see they are at the head of the Great Alaska Diamond Company. I've take three thousand dollars' worth of stock and have come over to talk about it."

"Have you paid in the money?"

"Why, yes."

"So have others," grinned Ned, who saw before him another victim of the precious pair.

"They're all right, ain't they?" exclaimed the countryman. "I like the way their letters read. 'It's a great chance,' said I to myself, and so I put in my spondulix. What are you smiling at, boy?"

"When you get your dividend you'll be wiser than you are now," Ned laughed.

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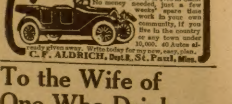

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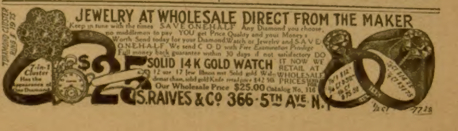

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and before the swindled Jerseyman could speak again he made off.

"The man who said that a fool is born every minute wasn't far from right," he thought to himself. "Such scamps as Barrow and Batch deserve hanging. If we can prove the shooting of Old Condor against Boris, he'll get the noose or the chair, and Basil Batch will come in for his share of justice."

With this he dodged into a narrower street and kept on his way to Billy's humble quarters.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SHADOW OF DOOM.

MATTERS and things were getting pretty interesting, Ned thought. He was installed in Hector Illiff's house where he could watch Basil Batch and that worthy would not have a chance to practice his nefarious art on the old millionaire.

He had to be on the watch all the time he was on the street lest he again fall into the snare of the two rascals who, knowing that he had escaped from the fire, would be more than ever anxious to trap him.

When he had had his visit with Billy, he left the house with every sense on the alert. To get caught again would certainly end his career, and the villains would triumph. Therefore he watched every corner as he hurried to his new abode.

Entering by a latchkey which Doris had provided, he first looked in upon the old man, whom he found asleep, and then proceeded to his own room. In a little while he was cuddled up in the softest bed he had ever known, but all at once he found himself wide awake. A little clock on the table indicated that it was nearly midnight, and something told him that all was not well.

Jumping into his clothes, he raced down the broad stair as noiselessly as possible, and to his astonishment saw a light in the library. This confirmed his suspicions, and he went to the door and turned the knob as discreetly as possible.

A dim light flooded the ample room and enabled the boy to see a man kneeling before the door of the safe. Being unarmed, he could not face the intruder with a weapon, and he was about to withdraw when the man got upon his feet and revealed the gloating face of Basil Batch.

Ned was almost struck dumb by the discovery. As yet he had not been perceived, but he knew that discovery was but the event of a few moments, therefore he began to withdraw.

"Hold on there!" said a commanding voice. "Stand where you are, you little guttersnipe!"

He was covered by a revolver which was held by a steady hand, and there was nothing to do but to obey.

"Come in here!" was the next command.

Ned advanced and stood face to face with Batch.

"Take that chair," said Basil, waving one hand toward the seat usually occupied by the old millionaire.

"Now!" Basil continued, when the wondering boy had obeyed. "You don't get off quite so easy this time. I am going to show you that I tolerate no spies at my heels."

The strange and powerful eyes were again working their will, and despite his efforts to keep awake Ned found himself falling into a singular slumber which he was never able to describe. He was at the man's mercy.

How much time passed he did not know, but when he came to his senses he found himself sitting in a strange room and bound to a chair in such a manner that he could move neither hand nor foot.

The appointments of the apartment were good, showing that he was in a house of some pretensions, and the more he looked about the more he became convinced that he was in the power of his old enemies. A light was burning near the wall, and this enabled him to see his surroundings.

Presently he heard a key turn in the lock to his right and the door opened. Turning his head, Ned looked at one of the most grotesque figures he had ever seen, a little man with a hunchback and a cadaverous face. This personage stood for a while looking at him out of a pair of evil eyes, and Ned returned the glare with interest.

"How do you like it?" simpered the dwarf, as he hobbled forward.

"Not very well, you may be sure," was the reply, and Ned tried to smile, but it was a poor attempt.

"You're pretty well tied up, methinks," was the answer, and the little man stood off and grinned. "I fancy Scotty has tied people before."

"Scotty?" echoed Ned.

"Yes. He's an artist, Scotty is——"

"You mean Basil Batch."

"I don't know Basil Batch," was the reply, "tho I fancy Scotty has a good many names, for he's a man of parts."

"A first-class rascal, I should say," Ned remarked. "But who brought me here?"

"Oh, Scotty, I suppose."

"And he tied me so I couldn't get away?"

"Yes. Pretty cute in him, don't you think?"

Ned was tired of bandying with the little man, so he became silent.

"I just dropped in to see how you were getting along," the dwarf said. "The next move will be somewhere else."

The words went thru the boy like a bolt.

"So I'm not going to remain here?" he said.

"I guess not. Scotty said he would come back when he had made certain arrangements."

"But he didn't tell you what they were?"

"I'm not in Scotty's confidence in everything," was the answer. "I know you've done something he doesn't like. You're in his way."

"That's right, I am," said Ned. "And so long as I live I'll always be in his way. In what part of the city am I?"

"Please don't ask me, for I'm not allowed to tell."

"You're Scotty's slave, I see; or, in other words, you belong body and soul to Basil Batch and his infamous companion, Boris Barrow. Never mind."

The dwarf drew toward the door, but all the time kept his queer eyes fastened on the boy prisoner. Suddenly he stopped.

"What's between you and Scotty?" he suddenly asked.

"I'm trying to keep him from robbing an old man and blighting the life of a young girl."

"Honest?"

"As true as I live."

"Oh, that's not very much nowadays," grimaced the dwarf. "It's everybody for himself in this city. I'd like to rob somebody myself, if I could—some one who had the chink, don't you see."

With this the little man laughed and laid his hand on the knob of the door.

"I guess there's little difference between you and Basil Batch!" exclaimed Ned, with feeling. "What do you call yourself, anyhow?"

"Touch-and-Go."

"Well, you may go without touching me," smiled Ned. "I don't want such as you to lay hands upon me."

The man was gone. Ned heard the lock click and knew he was alone once more.

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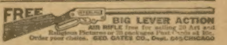

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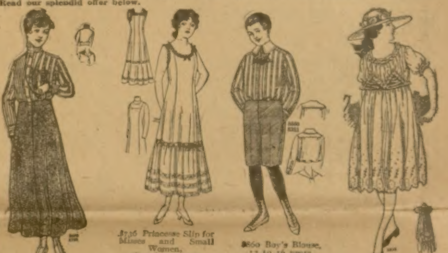

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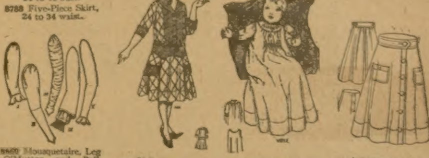

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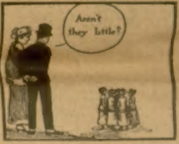
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